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DETECTIVE STORIES

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FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

WHEN CROOKS CONSPIRE

by

Harold Podhajski

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When Crooks Conspire

by—Harold F. Podhajski

CHAPTER ONE

TO say that I was astonished by the happenings in the railway station that afternoon in May would be to describe my state of mind in the mildest of terms. I was a great deal more than astonished. In fact, I know of no word in the English language sufficiently efficacious to express it—or in any other language, for the matter of that. In all the varied experiences of my thirty-two years nothing quite so remarkable has ever happened to me before; I hope to Heaven that nothing like it ever happens to me again. And then, too, the incident mortified me beyond measure, for I knew that if any of my friends had happened to be standing near by at the time and witnessed it I would be the butt of ridicule at my club for a long time to come. The thought was startling, to say the least, and I glanced quickly about me with a guilty furtiveness that held little of assurance. But, thank the Lord, I saw no one I knew. If I had I am convinced that I would have taken my departure on the next outgoing train and consigned a highly successful law practice to the four winds of the universe in preference to facing the music. For my friends all regard me as a confirmed bachelor, a regular "woman hater" if ever there lived one. And to have told them the real truth about the thing would only have been to make matters that much the worse, for I could never in the world have made any one believe so wild-sounding a yarn.

According to my watch it was precisely two o'clock in the afternoon when the train I was waiting for drew up alongside the platform and came to a fussy halt. I had come to the station to meet a friend, and as I stood there watching the people get off the train a young lady dismounted from one of the coaches, swept the platform with a hurried glance, and then, with a suddenness that was startling, came rushing toward me, arms outstretched in eager welcome. I had just time to see that she was a very beautiful young lady indeed when those outstretched arms encircled my neck and she kissed me squarely upon the lips—a long, passionate caress that thrilled me as nothing had ever thrilled me before, and at the same time, as cleverly as a magician might have done it, deftly slipped a paper into my hand.

"Oh! How glad I am to see you!" she cried in a tone so loud that people passing by turned to stare at her. "And I am so tired! You must call a cab, dear, and take me home at once."

The thing happened so suddenly, was so utterly unexpected, that when I finally managed to extricate myself from the girl's embrace I could only stand there staring at her in petrified amazement. For I was absolutely and firmly convinced that she was no one I had ever seen before.

Finally, however, I managed to recover some semblance at least of my normal equilibrium.

"My dear madam!" I began to protest. "You—you have evidently made——"

"For heaven's sake, dear!" she interrupted me quickly. "Please don't stand there staring at me like that. I'm not a ghost. Come, now, and hurry me home like a good boy. I am absolutely tired out by my journey."

"But—but I don't understand, madam," I began again. "Really, I—I am not——"

For the second time she abruptly interrupted me.

"Oh, I have so many things to tell you, dear," she rattled on, talking so rapidly that I hadn't a chance to get a word in edgewise. "Aunt Emily is going to marry again, and who do you suppose she has picked out? None other than old Scroggins. You remember him surely? But come, dear. I'll tell you all about it on our way home."

And then quite suddenly the thought flashed into my mind that perhaps the woman was mad. I stared at her for a moment intently, and while I was forced to admit that her looks certainly belied it, still her actions were such that no other explanation seemed possible. I had never heard before of insanity manifesting itself in quite so unusual a form, but I did see a play once where a woman who walked in her sleep had a mania for embracing strange men. But *this* woman was evidently very much awake, and therefore, thought I, she must surely be crazy. In that case, then, it would probably be advisable to humor her, for I had had enough experience with insane persons to know that they are likely to become violent unless their whims are indulged. And realizing that I would shortly become the centre of much unwelcome attention should such a thing happen, I therefore offered no further protest as the girl took an impulsive step toward me and slipped her hand familiarly through my arm. On the contrary, I accepted the situation gracefully and suffered myself to be led along the platform toward a group of shouting taxi drivers whose cabs were lined up in front of the station. But scarcely had we proceeded more than a step or two when the girl leaned closer to me and began to talk rapidly, earnestly, in a tone of voice so low that it was hardly more than a whisper.

"Please don't think me insane," she said, as though in answer to the thought that had flashed suddenly into my mind. "I assure you I am not. I have very good reasons for what I did. If you will help me now I will explain everything to you later. At this very moment we are being followed by two men who are watching every move that we make. I *must* get away from them, and in helping me do so you will probably be saving my life. You *will* help me, won't you? Please say that you will."

"But—but I don't understand——" I began, bewilderment and surprise mingling in the expression on my face.

"Of course you don't," she interrupted. "I can't explain now because we haven't the time. I can only ask you to trust me—believe in me. Help me, my friend, and you will have done a noble action—one that you will never have cause to regret. Later I will explain everything to you. Please! It isn't much that I ask."

Now ordinarily I assure you that I am not a man who is at all susceptible to the so-called wiles of women, but there was something in those pleading eyes upturned to mine that was almost irresistible. And the girl was beautiful, too, there could be no denying the truth of that. I have traveled far in my day, and in many lands, but she was such a girl as I have never seen before. I could feel the touch of her fingers as she nervously clutched my arm, could feel her breath against my cheek as she leaned toward me, and I was conscious of a curious sense of exhilaration, a strange thrill somewhere inside of me. That she was virtuous, honest, I did not for a moment doubt; it was there in her face, in the depths of her eyes. Well, she had not asked my help in vain.

What manner of man would it be who could refuse such a plea from a girl like this?

"Very well," I told her finally, resigning myself with a sigh to the spell of those pleading eyes, "if I can help you I will do so. What is it that you wish me to do?"

I felt my heart skip a beat at the look she gave me.

"We will take one of these cabs," she explained hurriedly. "Undoubtedly we will be shadowed. The document I give you I wish you to keep for me until I ask for it—probably to-morrow. It is the thing these men are after, and it is only fair to tell you that they will go to any lengths to obtain it—even murder, I am afraid, if necessary. But they do not know that you have it, so you will really not be in any danger. Besides, they probably do not know who you are, and if we can give them the slip now they are not likely to find out. I'll tell you more about it when we are in the cab."

"But it will not be necessary to take a cab. I have my own car here."

"So much the better. Where did you leave it?"

"Just across the street. Come," I urged, taking her by the arm. "We'll lead these friends of yours a merry chase. If I don't run them ragged inside of half a dozen blocks they'll have to hustle some."

We crossed quickly over to where I had left my car standing against the curb.

"Suppose I sit in the back until we have managed to get away," she suggested. "We can talk about the rest of it afterwards."

I agreed to that arrangement, and assisting her into the car, I climbed in behind the wheel and started the motor. At this moment she nudged me gently, to attract my attention, and asked for the paper that only a few moments before she had surreptitiously placed in my hand. I turned to hand it to her, and happening to glance toward the station, I saw that two men had just come out of it and were standing there at the edge of the walk talking earnestly with one of the taxi drivers. Presently all three of them climbed into the car. For a moment or two longer I pretended to busy myself with the starter as I watched the cab on the opposite side of the street, which remained standing motionless against the curb, its engine throbbing. Doubtless, I concluded, it was awaiting my own departure, in which event the two men in the tonneau must be the men the girl had spoken of. I was sure of it a moment later when I had turned at a near-by corner and started toward the business part of the city, for as I glanced back I saw that the other car was following only a few yards behind.

"The plot thickens," I said, addressing the girl over my shoulder. "We are being followed."

"Of course. I told you that we would be. Do you think you can manage to elude them?"

"H'm! Easy enough. Just watch me."

Willingly I bent myself to the task of shaking off our pursuers; by this time I was beginning to heartily enjoy this unusual adventure. For several blocks I threaded a course through the downtown streets that was precarious to say the least, dodging this way and that amid the traffic, missing disaster by a scant few inches half a dozen times. On two or three occasions the majestic arm of the law held me up for a moment or two at the more congested crossings, but by the time we had covered some ten or twelve blocks I was willing to wager a goodly sum that we had shown our followers a clean pair of heels. Whereupon I throttled down to a slower pace.

"Well, are we rid of them yet?" I asked, again addressing the girl over my shoulder, but keeping a watchful eye on the pavement in front of me.

She did not answer, and I repeated the question in a louder tone. But still no answer. I slackened speed then to a snail's pace and turned my head, wondering at the cause of her silence. What I saw, or did not see, rather, gave me such a start that I narrowly missed running down a group of people who were in the act of mounting a street car just ahead of me. I came to a full stop then and turned squarely around to look behind me again, convinced that my eyesight must surely have played me a trick. But it hadn't.

The back seat of my car was absolutely empty!

CHAPTER TWO

FOR the remainder of that memorable day it seemed to me that I was moving about in some sort of a trance, and more than once I pinched myself to make sure that I was really awake. I had always heard that pinching one's self was a reliable test, but I was almost inclined to doubt it. It did not seem possible that this thing had actually happened, that it was really not a part of some unusual dream.

Honestly, now, I don't see how any one can blame me for feeling that way about it. I am quite sure that you would feel like that yourself if so remarkable a thing ever happened to you. Think of it! A girl whom I had never seen before in my life—and a most beautiful girl at that—had rushed up to me, thrown her arms about my neck, kissed me with much fervor. And then the rest of it: the strange story she had told me, that precarious journey through the streets, its startling climax—her sudden and mysterious disappearance.

For ten tortuous hours I racked my brain trying to untangle the threads of this inexplicable mystery—to be exact, from two o'clock in the afternoon, when the thing happened, until twelve o'clock that night when sleep finally closed my weary eyes. But I might as well have sallied forth in quest of the rainbow's end for all the good it did me, for here indeed was a problem that would have taxed the ingenuity of a Sherlock Holmes.

Who *was* the girl? I asked myself that question over and again. Why was she in danger? Who were the two men? What was the thing she had intended to give me? And why had she taken her departure in so sudden and mysterious a manner? You have heard, I presume, that it is supposed to be a more or less difficult task to find a needle in a haystack. Bosh! It would be a dead cinch compared to finding an answer to these puzzling questions. The more I tried to figure the thing out the more complicated it became, and when I finally went to sleep I was even worse off than when I started.

Just how long I may have slept I do not know, but it seemed that I had scarcely closed my eyes when I awoke suddenly to find myself in a cold sweat, conscious of a strange sense of restlessness for which I could not account. As I am ordinarily a very sound sleeper, I lay there for some time wondering what could have happened to arouse me so thoroughly, for I had seemed to be wide awake the instant I opened my eyes. Somewhere in a distant part of the house I heard a clock strike the hour of two. Outside the rain that had been pattering against my windows when I fell asleep had stopped and a bright summer moon, finding a rift in the clouds, cast its rays in a white, lustrous streak across the floor. Silence. A curious cessation, it seemed, of immediate sounds.

And then suddenly there came to my ears a faint, rhythmic tapping noise which seemed to emanate from the adjoining room. I lay there for a time listening to it, wondering——

Tap, tap, tap, tap, in quick repetition, and then a pause. Tap, tap, tap, tap—another pause.

I was out of bed in an instant treading softly in my bare feet; I crossed over and stood by the door, my ear glued close against its panels. My apartment is a somewhat modest one, consisting of only two rooms, one of which I use for a study, while the other comprised my sleeping quarters. It was from my study that the sound of the tapping appeared to come, and as I stood there at the door I could hear it very plainly. Always the four taps in quick repetition followed by a second's pause, then the tapping again and another pause. Several times the operation was repeated as I stood there in the darkness listening. The thing puzzled me, to say the least, for I hadn't the slightest idea in the world what could be the meaning of that mysterious tapping.

Slowly, softly I turned the knob of the door, opened it a few inches, and cautiously peered through the crack into the adjoining room. An arc lamp in the street just below shed a brilliant light through the open windows, and I could plainly see the figure of a man kneeling on the bricks in front of the fireplace at one side of the room. In

one hand he held a flashlight and in the other a metal paper cutter which he had evidently taken from my desk, for I recognized it as my own. Keeping the light leveled upon the bricks in front of him, he was rapidly and systematically rapping each one of them with the handle of the cutter. He would tap four times, pause, repeat the operation, then select another brick and go through the same process.

Mystified I stood there for fully a minute watching him, wondering what his object could possibly be. Why in the world should a man steal into my apartment in the dead of night, kneel down in front of my fireplace, and pound with the handle of a paper-cutter upon the bricks? Such behavior was unique, to say the least, utterly beyond my understanding; I couldn't even *guess* at the meaning of it.

Evidently, too, other things had happened in that room while I slept. The door of my wall safe stood wide open; every drawer in my desk had been emptied of its contents; not even the letter files in which I keep my private correspondence had been spared. Papers and documents of every kind were scattered about the floor in a most promiscuous and disorderly manner. The room was in a perfect mess. Had a cyclone passed through it I do not believe it could have left a more hopeless wreck.

As quietly as possible I widened the crack in the door until it was large enough to permit the passage of my body. Softly I tiptoed into the room and reached out to press the electric light button just beside the door. The man at the fireplace continued his mysterious tapping, so much engrossed in the task that he was entirely unaware of my presence. In another instant I had turned on the lights, and not until then did I realize what a foolhardy thing I had done. For I was in my pajamas, my bare feet, and without a weapon of any kind what chance had I against this midnight marauder? The thought gave me no comfort, I assure you. But it was too late to back out of it now, so I turned toward him with a display of bravado that I really did not feel.

For the first time I became aware of the fact that there were two of them. The other man at the moment I turned on the lights was standing beside my bookcase in the opposite corner of the room, and for that reason I had not observed him. I perceived, too, that he had removed nearly all of the books and piled them in a great heap beside the case. He was the first of the two to recover from the surprise my sudden entrance created, and the speed with which he whipped an automatic out of his hip pocket was marvelous.

That my last moment had come I hadn't the slightest doubt. I stood there petrified with fear staring into the barrel of it. To face death on an equal footing is bad enough, but to stand up in front of it with the conviction in your heart that you haven't a dog's chance is infinitely worse. I hope that I may never be called upon again to pass through a more agonizing ten seconds, for every instant I was expecting the contents of that miniature cannon to be emptied into my body.

But the ten seconds passed and nothing of the kind happened. Instead the man with the gun burst into a sudden peal of laughter, and while it startled me for a moment because it was so unexpected, it also assured me of the fact that for the present at least I was apparently in no danger of annihilation.

"You will pardon me for such levity," he said after a moment, "but you *do* look funny. I have never seen a man quite so scared before. Please set your mind at rest, though. I have no intention of pulling the trigger; at least not yet."

"I am glad that one of us finds something in the situation to laugh at," I retorted angrily, finding my voice. "To me there is no humor in it. I will be a month at least straightening out this mess."

"I am sorry," he replied, "but it is really your own fault. You shouldn't have hidden the thing in such an outlandish place. Where *have* you put it, anyhow? Nowhere in this room, certainly. We've covered every inch of it."

"Just what are you talking about?" I demanded. "I don't seem to understand."

"You really don't expect us to believe that, do you?"

"Well, it's immaterial to me whether you do or not," I answered, trying to appear indifferent. Then, after a pause: "Still, I must admit that you have kindled my curiosity. What is it that I shouldn't have hidden in such an outlandish place?"

He stared at me for a moment intently, just the semblance of a smile curling the corners of his mouth that clearly enough evidenced his doubt as to the sincerity of my question.

"My friend," he said finally, "subterfuge will gain you nothing. Please do not attempt to evade the issue, for it will only be to your sorrow. You know quite well why we are here, what we are looking for. I will give you just five minutes in which to produce it."

He did not raise his voice, but there was a certain menace in his tone that was decidedly unpleasant.

"Well, if you don't object I'll spend them sitting down, then," I declared, and without awaiting his permission I crossed over and sat down in the chair at my desk.

"Either you are a brave man or a consummate idiot," he advised. "I can't decide which."

Carefully I selected a cigarette from a package on my desk, and lighting it with an assumption of ease I did not feel, I sat there for a moment and thoughtfully studied the blue rings of smoke as they curled upward.

"Perhaps I can decide for you," I told him after a while, trying to keep my tone stoical, but not, I am afraid, succeeding very well in the effort. "I evidently must be a consummate idiot," I went on, "or I would know what you are talking about. Call it subterfuge if you wish, but I give you my word I haven't the slightest idea in the world what it is that you wish me to produce. You are quite sure that you have made no mistake?"

"The only mistake will be your own if you force my hand, I assure you of that. You have four minutes left."

Silence then as the clock on my mantel shelf slowly ticked off another minute.

"Three more minutes," quietly stated the man, who stood facing me just across the desk. There was no mistaking the menace in his tone. "I wonder if you realize the danger you are in," he went on after a moment. "I promise you that I shall pull this trigger when the three minutes are up unless you tell me before that time where you have concealed the document the young lady gave you a few hours since."

CHAPTER THREE

INSTANTLY then there flashed into my mind the extraordinary adventure of the preceding afternoon. Strange, indeed, that the connection had not occurred to me before, as the very instant I had turned on the lights it had seemed to me that the faces of both these men were vaguely familiar. But somehow or other I had not been able to place them until this moment. They were undoubetdly the two I had seen at the station, the men who had followed the girl and myself on that precarious journey through the streets. And what, I wondered, was my own status as one of the moving characters in this mysterious drama? What was it that the girl had said? That there was something I was to keep for her until she came for it later. And then what else? "It is the thing these men are after," she had told me. "They will go to any lengths to obtain it—even murder."

Nonsense! I refused to believe there was any possibility of that. Doubtless the girl had exaggerated; all women were inclined toward the dramatic. For some reason or other these men seemed quite certain that the girl had given this document into my keeping. Had I followed my inclinations I would have let them keep on thinking so and perhaps had a bit of fun out of this situation, but when one finds one's self staring into the wicked-looking barrel of an automatic revolver—well, one rather hesitates about taking chances.

"Look here," I said finally, turning again toward the man on the opposite side of my desk; "it seems to me that you are rather inclined to take things for granted. It is impossible for me to produce this document you speak of for the simple reason that I do not happen to have it."

"You can hardly blame me if I doubt the sincerity of your statement," he told me. "Apparently you are still seeking to evade the issue. You have less than two minutes left."

"No, I am not seeking to evade the issue," I declared, thinking rapidly. "I have told you the truth. If you don't choose to believe it I am sure that I haven't the power to make you do so."

"Well, for very good reasons I don't choose to believe it. Furthermore, knowing the contents of that document as you do, I should think you would realize that, whatever be the cost, we intend to obtain it before we leave this room."

Instantly aroused by the tense note in his voice, I remained silent for a long moment of thought, frowning the while at the cigarette in my fingers. I had looked for a note of theatricality in his demeanor, in his words, but I detected only the grim determination of one who is playing a desperate game. After all, perhaps, the girl had not exaggerated; there might be a far deeper significance to this situation than I had first thought.

"You are still taking things too much for granted," I said finally, more worried than I cared to admit even to myself. "I seem to be the innocent victim of circumstances, and whether you believe it or not they are circumstances of which I haven't the slightest knowledge. For some reason you seem quite certain that this document you are looking for is in my possession, and that I am familiar with its contents. Well, I repeat that you are entirely wrong in both suppositions."

"My reasons for doubting the truth of that statement are based upon very good grounds," the other stated with an expressive shrug. "In the first place, we are absolutely certain that you have it. In that case you are undoubtedly familiar with its contents. Considering the vital importance of this document, it is hardly reasonable to presume that the young lady would intrust it to one who did not possess that knowledge. What you hope to gain by trying to mislead me I cannot understand. As I have told you before subterfuge will gain you nothing. The truth of the matter is that you know entirely too much about this thing for the welfare of the various persons whose names are mentioned in that document. Without it, however, you haven't a shred of proof, and once we have obtained it you need have no fear that we will molest you further. Failing in that, we shall probably adopt the only other course that is left open to us. One life, more or less, means nothing where so much is at stake. Though you don't seem to realize it, you are playing a very dangerous game."

The tone of his voice was mild enough, but there was a depth of meaning under it that I did not fail to comprehend. I regarded him for a moment thoughtfully before replying, and then forcing an uneasy laugh, I went on slowly, choosing my words with care.

"It seems impossible for me to convince you that I am telling the truth," I said. "You have just stated that you are absolutely certain I have this document. I tell you again, as I have told you before, that I haven't it. Why can you not give me the benefit of the doubt? Why are you so certain that this thing was given into my keeping?"

"We have very good reasons for thinking so," he answered. "When the young lady left the train yesterday afternoon we knew that she had this document somewhere about her person. To be absolutely frank with you, your presence there to meet her was unexpected and seriously upset our plans. But for that she would have been taken into custody at once, and we would have obtained what we were after. As you are aware, that plan had to be abandoned. Well, we followed you in a cab, and saw this young lady leave your car at one of the downtown crossings. In less than five minutes she was placed under arrest, taken to the police station and searched by a matron. Not until then did the possibility occur to us that she had turned this document over to you. However, it was quite evident that she had done so, because she certainly did not have it in her possession at the time she was searched.

"One of us took the license number on

your car, and we lost little time in locating you. From that moment you have been constantly shadowed. We are reasonably certain, therefore, that you still have this document. If possible we wish to settle this matter without having to employ desperate measures, so why not accept the inevitable and be done with it? Surely you must realize how serious your situation is. I tell you all this because I want you to understand that we know quite well what we are about, and that you are only wasting time trying to mislead us. Your safest course will be to tell at once where you have concealed this document."

For several seconds after he had finished I sat there at my desk thinking over what he had said, wondering what would be the best course to pursue. If anything the man's statement left the puzzle even more complex than it had been before. The girl had been arrested, he said, taken to the station, and searched by a matron. Arrested! What, I wondered, did that signify? Was she a crook? I meditated over this point, and finally convinced myself that she could not be. If she were, why did these men not come out in the open? Why had they visited my apartment like thieves in the dead of the night? Evidently there was some sinister purport back of all this that as yet I knew nothing of. If I only knew the contents of that document doubtless I could piece this puzzle. But it was useless to waste time trying to figure it out without that knowledge, for as matters now stood the whole thing was just a riddle. I gave it up after a while and threw aside my cigarette with an air of finality, determined to tell these men the whole truth about what had happened the preceding afternoon. They probably wouldn't believe it, but this seemed to me the only course to pursue.

"If what you say is true I can understand why you should think that this so-called document was given into my keeping," I said at last, watching the man closely to note the effect of my words. "Nevertheless, what I have told you is the truth. I had the document for a few moments only and I do not know its contents. Furthermore, strange as it may seem in view of what happened, until this girl came up to me in the station yesterday afternoon I never saw her before in my life."

Amazement was clearly evidenced in the faces of the two men.

"I can't believe that a man in his right senses would invent such a yarn as that with any hope of its being credited," said the one who had been doing the talking. "You look to me like a perfectly sensible individual. Either you are telling the truth, or you are a mighty good actor. I'm almost inclined to believe you are telling the truth."

"Believe me, it *is* the truth," I went on quickly, determined to follow up my advantage. "I find myself playing a part in a most remarkable adventure, but as I told you before I am the innocent victim of circumstances of which I know nothing. If I really had this document I would certainly be a fool not to produce it, wouldn't I? When this girl came up to me at the station yesterday and—er—well, acted as she did, you can well understand my feelings in view of the fact that I had never laid eyes on her before. My first thought was that she was suffering from some form of insanity, and in order to avoid a possible scene I decided to humor her. However, as we walked along the platform she told me that she was being followed by two men; that her life was in danger. She asked my help, and I agreed to give it. Well, you know what happened then. You followed us in a cab, and I did my best to get rid of you. When I thought that I had done so I turned around, and you can well imagine my surprise on finding that the girl had disappeared—that she was not in the back seat. You say that she got out when we were held up by the traffic at one of the town-town crossings. Why she did so I haven't the slightest idea. Believe it or not, gentlemen, but I give you my honest word I have told you the whole truth. I'd certainly like to know myself what it's all about."

The man on the opposite side of the desk stared at me for a moment doubtfully, as though undecided whether or not to believe me. And then, meditatively, as though talking to himself: "H-m! She might

have done it at that. Most remarkable thing I ever heard of, though. A man she never saw before——" He paused for a moment, deliberating, and presently went on in a louder tone: "But look here, if what you say is true, how do you account for the disappearance of this document? We know for a fact that the girl had it upon her person when she left the train. What has become——"

He stopped abruptly, leaving the sentence unfinished, for at that instant there came a sudden and unexpected interruption—the sound of a shrill, high-pitched voice from the corner of the room.

"Hands up!" ordered the voice. "Hands up, I say, or you're a dead man!"

To say that the two men were startled by this amazing interlude is to use a term that is mild indeed. Both wheeled quickly about toward the point from which the voice had seemed to emanate, and stood there staring in petrified amazement at—what do you suppose? You'd never guess it in a thousand years. Nothing more startling than a small paroquet squatting upon the cross-bar of his perch and blinking indignantly about him.

CHAPTER FOUR

NOW, as every one knows, it is no difficult matter to teach a paroquet to talk if one has patience, for the little bird really has quite a bit of intelligence. This was one I had picked up in the course of my travels, and as we had been together for quite some years I had taught him to say many things. One of them was "Hands up! Hands up, I say, or you're a dead man!" I had done it merely to have a bit of fun with my friends who drop in occasionally at my rooms, and I suppose that his slumbers being rudely disturbed by the sound of our voices, this expression merely happened to be the first thing that occurred to him.

At any rate, I was not slow to take advantage of the opportunity a kind fate had thus presented me with, and jerking open the top drawer of my desk, I quickly found the pistol I always keep there. In another instant I was on my feet, and before either of the two men had recovered from the astonishment occasioned by my paroquet's dramatic interruption I had them covered. In the excitement of the moment the other man had lowered his own revolver, and the advantage was now entirely on my side.

"The little bird's order holds good," I said grimly. "Up with your hands, both of you, and no funny business. I'll shoot on the slightest provocation."

Having by this time recovered somewhat from their first surprise, the two men faced about at the sound of my voice, and noting the unexpected turn affairs had taken both promptly obeyed my command and raised their hands.

"Now, my friends," I went on calmly, "I'll show you that two can play at this little game. If either one of you give me the slightest cause I warn you that I will shoot."

Whereupon I sat down again in the chair at my desk and, keeping the revolver ready for instant action, I started to take off the receiver of the phone.

"Wait! What the devil are you going to do?" demanded the man who stood facing me just across the desk.

"Call the police, of course," I told him. "What did you think I was going to do?"

"You surely don't mean that, do you?" he asked, with a laugh that under the circumstances caused me no little surprise.

"And why not?" I wanted to know.

He regarded me keenly for a moment before replying.

"A few moments ago you told me a most remarkable story," he said finally. "At the time I was inclined to doubt its veracity for what seemed to me good and sufficient reasons. Evidently, however, you must have been telling the truth if it is really your intention to call the police. Don't you know who I am?"

"No, and, what's more, I don't care. Who you are doesn't accord you the privilege of breaking into my apartment as you have. That, I believe, is a crime punishable by imprisonment."

"Yes, I admit it," he agreed with another

laugh. "But there happen to be some rather peculiar circumstances associated with this enterprise. I am convinced now that you really don't understand what those circumstances are, though I confess that I certainly doubted it before. My name is McDougal—Lieutenant John J. McDougal, of the city detective department. My friend here is Sergeant Whalen, of the same department. Will that information cause you to change your mind about phoning the police?"

"I suppose, of course, that you are prepared to prove you are really McDougal?" I asked doubtfully.

"There will be no difficulty about that," he answered positively. "I have papers in my pocket that will quickly enough establish my identity."

"Very well. Produce them."

From an inner pocket of his coat he drew forth several letters, and after fingering through them for a moment he tossed the lot on the desk in front of me. All, I perceived, were addressed to Lieutenant John J. McDougal, in care of Police Headquarters, and there seemed to be no doubt but that he was.

"In that blue envelope," he went on, "you'll find a newspaper clipping with my picture. That ought to be enough to convince you."

I took out the clipping and carefully examined it. I don't recall the exact nature of the story, but there was a single-column cut along with it, below which was printed McDougal's name. Undoubtedly the picture was that of the man standing before me.

"Well, you are evidently McDougal," I admitted. "Still, I can't see why that should excuse your action. You men have broken in here like an ordinary pair of thieves. I don't understand it at all. What's it all about?"

"The young lady you so kindly assisted yesterday is a very clever crook. She stole the document we came here in search of."

"You will pardon me, Lieutenant McDougal, if I doubt the truth of that statement," I declared, slipping the revolver back into my desk. "If that were the case, why did you not come out in the open about it in the first place?"

"As I told you before," he answered quickly, "there are some rather peculiar circumstances connected with this case. For one thing, it is absolutely necessary that the document be recovered without any publicity. Naturally we thought at first that you were in cahoots with this girl. When we learned, however, by tracing down the license number of your automobile, that you were Mr. Philip Grey, the attorney, we knew at once, of course, that to arrest a man of your prominence was not to be thought of, if we were to keep this thing out of the papers. Therefore we chose this method of trying to recover the stolen document, believing all the time that the girl had given it into your keeping. I am, however, convinced that you have told us the real truth."

"You seem to forget, lieutenant, that you even went so far as to threaten my life on two or three occasions. Is that ordinarily a custom of the police department in trying to recover stolen property?"

"When that was done we thought that you had this thing in your possession, and that you were an accomplice of the girl's, and consequently a crook. I thought, perhaps, that I might be able to scare you into telling me where you had concealed it. Naturally the threat would not have been carried out."

"Well, that's some consolation at least," I told him, not finding the remembrance exactly pleasant to dwell upon. "Still, this whole thing is as much of a muddle to me now as it was before—more so, if anything. What is the nature of this document?"

"That is one thing, Mr. Grey, that I cannot tell you," he replied. "If you knew its contents you would understand our purpose in coming here like this. As it is, I am afraid you will have to be satisfied without knowing any more about it than you do at present."

"Well, then, I don't see that there is anything to be gained by prolonging this interview, is there?"

"No, I don't suppose that there is," he agreed after a moment's thought. "Before we leave, however, let me give you a bit of

good advice, Mr. Grey, that you will do very well to heed. Consider yourself fortunate that the part you have played in this little drama has not gotten you into serious trouble. Your safest course by far will be to forget all about it, and to say nothing about what has happened here to-night to any one. You will accept that advice if you are wise."

CHAPTER FIVE

AFTER the two men had taken their departure I returned to my bed, but weary as I was sleep failed to come. I must have been there for an hour at least running over in my mind the remarkable happenings of the past few hours, trying to evolve some sort of a solution for this startling sequence of events.

To me life has always seemed something of a humdrum, every-day affair, and I must confess to being more or less of an unimaginative person. Yet, in spite of my materialism, there was nothing else I could do but accept the facts in the case and what came with them. The one thing uppermost in my mind was an all-devouring curiosity to understand the meaning of the things that had happened, but it was quite evident that until I should know the contents of that document these men were looking for the thing would remain an enigma.

As to the girl herself, I was absolutely and firmly convinced that she was on the level. McDougal had lied about her beyond any question of doubt. I do not profess to know women, but I have seen much of this world in my day, and I do at least know the difference between virtue and vice.

When I awoke the following morning the sun was already high in the heavens, its rays piercing my windows with a cheerful golden splendor. As the events of the night recurred to me my first thought was that I must have been dreaming. But I soon decided it could not have been a dream, for the whole thing was too indelibly stamped in my memory to permit of belief in its unreality.

I dressed at once, and after telephoning my office that I would not be down until the afternoon, I began to straighten out the mess my nocturnal visitors had made of things in my study the night before. It was a wearisome task refiling letters and papers in their proper places, but I kept at it for more than an hour and finally had things in some semblance of order. I turned my attention to a pile of newspapers of recent date that I always keep in order in the bottom of my bookcase, for in my law work I frequently have occasion to refer to them. These papers had been scattered more or less promiscuously about the floor, and I started to return them to the case in their proper order.

I had straightened out perhaps a dozen of them when suddenly my attention was arrested by a picture on the outside front page of the *Times,* which, I noted, bore a date of about three months before. It was a full-length picture of two people that had been snapped by a news photographer—one a man I judged to be about middle age; the other a girl, who stood directly beside him in the picture. It was the likeness of the girl that held my attention, for she was the same girl who had played so important a part in my adventure of the previous afternoon.

In a black-bordered box just above the photograph was the following caption:

> George Henry Rowland, publisher of the *Daily Gazette,* and his daughter, Miss Agnes Rowland, photographed in front of the Federal Building immediately after Rowland had been sentenced to a four-year term in the United States penitentiary at Atlanta, following his recent conviction for alleged vote-buying at the last general election.

Below the picture was a story reviewing the case, which at the time had attracted nation-wide interest. Naturally I was familiar with most of its details, for I had followed the case closely during Rowland's trial in the United States court. Nevertheless I read the story through from start to finish, for it instantly occurred to me that in view of the fact that this girl was Row-

land's daughter, there might possibly be some connection between this case and my own extraordinary adventure.

Rowland, it seemed, had been first indicted by the Federal grand jury upon the testimony of one William (Bill) Ryerson, a political power over on the West Side. Rowland's paper, the *Gazette*, had supported an independent candidate in the mayoralty race, and during the trial in the United States court Ryerson testified that Rowland had turned over to him the sum of $25,000, to be used for the buying of votes in his (Ryerson's) district. Among others who had furnished damaging evidence against the newspaper publisher during the trial was Lieutenant John J. McDougal of the city detective department, Sergeant Whalen, and two or three other officers of the same department.

As a result the jury had adjudged Rowland guilty of the charge, and he had later been sentenced to serve a four-year term in the Federal penitentiary at Atlanta.

For several moments after I had read this story I sat there on the floor in front of my bookcase running over in my mind the train of strange occurrences of the day and night before, convinced now that this case must have some connection or other with my own adventure. There were a number of things that would seem to indicate it, principally the identity of the girl and the fact that both McDougal and Whalen, my visitors of the night, had been among those to testify against Rowland. What sort of a document was this that these men had been looking for? What was its nature? These were questions that I could not answer—questions that I would have to answer, though, if I ever hoped to piece this puzzle together. The idea of accepting McDougal's advice and forgetting about it was not, of course, to be thought of. It would take more than all the king's horses and all the king's men to drag me out of it now. I was grimly determined to get at the bottom of it.

The sudden ringing of the telephone upon my desk broke in upon my thoughts, and carrying the copy of the paper with me, I crossed the room to answer it. Presuming the call to be from my office, I took down the receiver and called a mechanical "Hello!" into the transmitter. But the sound of the voice that answered electrified me into instant attention, for I recognized the voice of the girl Fate seemed to have cast for the heroine rôle in this remarkable drama.

"I would like to speak with Mr. Philip Grey," she stated.

"You are now doing so," I replied. "I am Mr. Grey."

A moment's pause and then hesitatingly, as though she found it difficult to ask the question: "I wonder if you are the gentleman who—who had the—er—the——"

"If you mean the gentleman you embraced at the station yesterday, I am he," I interrupted with a laugh, helping her out of the difficulty.

"Oh! Then you recognized my voice?"

"I was quite sure of it," I told her, and then after a second's pause I added: "Miss Rowland."

It was a long moment before she spoke.

"How in the world did you find that out?" she asked at last.

"If you mean how I learned your identity, it was by a rather strange coincidence. Accidentally I happened to see your picture in an old copy of the *Times*. The paper is here on my desk right now. But I don't recall having told you my own name. How did you learn it?"

"Well, you see I jotted down the license number of your automobile when I left you so—so suddenly yesterday. One of the reporters on my father's paper looked it up for me and found that the license was issued to Philip Grey, so it was just a case of putting two and two together, you see."

"Miss Rowland, to be quite frank with you about it, this whole thing has me puzzled. Your mysterious departure yesterday, for example—you might at least have bid me adieu."

"Please, Mr. Grey, don't—don't think ill of me, will you? I—I had very good reasons for what I did. I'll tell you all about it just as soon as I can see you."

"When will that be, right away?"

"If you wish it. Can you come to the

Westview Country Club? I am talking from there now."

"I shall be there within the next half-hour, Miss Rowland. By the way, though," I went on, "I haven't told you about what happened during the night. Our two friends of the railroad station paid me a visit."

"What—what do you mean?" she asked quickly.

Briefly I told her of what had occurred the night before. When I had finished she remained silent for several moments, and when she finally did speak I could see that my story had seriously disturbed her.

"Oh, Mr. Grey! I—I am so sorry to have caused you all this trouble."

"Don't let that worry you, dear lady," I hastened to assure her. "I wouldn't have missed this little adventure for worlds."

"You—you are very kind to say that. Some day I shall try to show you how much I really appreciate what you have done. When you know the truth about this thing, my good friend, you will not regret the help you have given me, I am sure of it."

"I will not regret it, Miss Rowland, even if I never know the truth," I answered. "I confess, though, to a devouring curiosity. You may expect me at the club in about thirty minutes—unless I'm picked up for speeding."

"Very well, Mr. Grey. I will be looking for you."

CHAPTER SIX

IN spite of the fact that the Westview Country Club was more than twelve miles beyond the limits of the city, by putting on a bit of speed when I had reached the open highway I managed to make the trip on schedule. There were very few people about at this hour of the day, and Miss Rowland led the way at once to a corner of one of the lesser-used lounging rooms where we could talk with little fear of being disturbed.

"I want to thank you again, Mr. Grey, for all you have done," she said, as we settled ourselves in a couple of easy-chairs. "I appreciate it a great deal more than I can tell you."

"But really, Miss Rowland, it doesn't seem that I have done very much," I protested. "I would have been glad to do a great deal more, but—er—well, you didn't give me the opportunity, you know."

"Ah, but you have done far more, my friend, than you realize," she emphatically declared.

"What do you mean?" I asked doubtfully. "You see, all this is a profound mystery to me. All I know about it is that you are evidently in possession of some sort of a document the existence of which certain parties seem to consider rather menacing to their welfare. At least that's the way I take it from the attitude of the two men who visited my apartment last night. Otherwise, however, the whole thing is beyond me."

"I will begin at the beginning and tell you the whole story."

She paused for a moment, deliberating, and then went on:

"As you are aware, my father was convicted in the Federal court a few months ago and sentenced to a four-year term in the Atlanta penitentiary. The case attracted wide interest at the time, so I suppose that you are familiar with it, are you not?"

"I remember it quite well, Miss Rowland," I answered sympathetically.

"Mr. Grey, my father was totally innocent of that crime," she declared, leaning suddenly toward me, her voice tense with emotion.

"You—you don't mean that it was——" I hesitated.

"A frame-up!" she added bitterly. "Absolutely!"

"A frame-up?" I echoed. "Can you prove it?"

"Yes, I can now. You have helped me to do it."

"But how?" I asked doubtfully.

"You will remember, Mr. Grey, if you are familiar with the case, that my father was indicted and later convicted largely on the testimony of this man Ryerson. Yesterday at noon Ryerson died in a sanitarium at Riverdale. Before he did so he sent for me and gave me a complete statement which

he had sworn to and signed. In that affidavit he made a full confession.

"If you have read my father's editorials in the *Gazette* the past two or three years you know that he was bitterly opposed to the present administration. In the last mayoralty race he supported the independent candidate, but unfortunately the party in power at the time again won out. After that my father was even more bitter than ever, but it was not a bitterness occasioned by his personal dislikes. He was merely trying to show the people of this city that our present administration was not only incompetent to rule, but that the men in the higher offices played the game of politics for all there was in it, irrespective of the public welfare. Well, finally his editorials began to bear fruit, and it became apparent that if he continued the campaign the next election would doubtless witness some sweeping changes at the city hall. At any rate, Ryerson says in his confession that certain men higher up decided to put my father out of the way, and in order to do so this vote-buying charge was framed up against him. It seems that this man McDougal had something or other on Ryerson, and therefore he (Ryerson) was virtually compelled to play the part he did in the case. Aided then by additional perjury on the part of McDougal and certain other officers of the police department of our city, my father was convicted.

"Somehow or other McDougal learned yesterday that Ryerson had sent for me, and guessing what his purpose was he and the other man came out to Riverdale, reaching there just after Ryerson died. They found that he had given me this statement, so they followed me on the train back to the city, evidently intending to arrest me on some trumped-up charge or other, and thus get possession of Ryerson's statement. The situation called for desperate measures on my part to prevent such a thing happening, and what I did at the station yesterday was part of the plan I had decided upon.

"At first it was my intention to leave this document into your keeping, because that really seemed to offer the safest course. However, another plan occurred to me that seemed even better still, so I acted upon it at once and left your car when we were held up by the traffic at one of the downtown crossings.

"As you have since learned, these men saw me do so, and in a very few minutes they had arrested me just as I had feared they would. However, my good friend, they did not find that document."

"But what in the world could you have done with it?" I asked. "If you had it in your possession when you left the car——"

"Ah, that is where I found your help invaluable, Mr. Grey," she interrupted. "Without knowing it you have taken care of that document for me. It is well perhaps that I changed my plans in view of what happened in your apartment last night."

"Really, Miss Rowland," I laughed. "You will have to be more explicit."

She glanced quickly about the room, and then leaning toward me, her voice scarcely more than a whisper said:

"I concealed Ryerson's statement, Mr. Grey, in the upholstery of your automobile."

And sure enough, we found it there safe and sound when we went out to my car a few moments later.

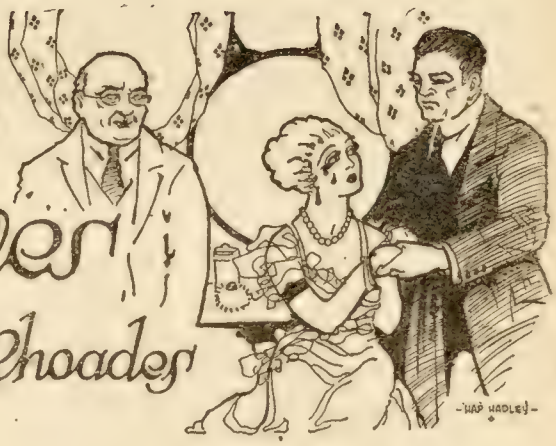
There is really but very little more to tell.

Ryerson's confession was turned over to the district attorney, who made a thorough investigation of it, and indictments were returned against McDougal, Whalen and four other officers of the police department. One of these officers, in the hope of immunity, turned state's evidence, and as a result the whole lot were convicted. McDougal himself was sentenced to a four-year term, while the others were given from one to three years. And Mr. Rowland, of course, was immediately released from the Federal penitentiary on a full pardon.

As for Miss Rowland—well, we lunch together to-morrow and dine together to-morrow evening, and if she will accept a continous three meals a day invitation—and I believe she will—my willingness to help a lady in distress will have brought its own reward.

Babb and the Forty Thieves

by Howard Philip Rhoades



DETECTIVE ALFRED BABB, of the Tenderloin police station, laughed derisively at Billy Reese, manager of the Revue Theatre.

"You're a senile dementia candidate, Bill," he insisted. "Where do you dig up such old stuff—a leading woman with her pearls stolen! Has she had her duck farm on Long Island, or does that come later?"

"Stop kidding, Babb," said Reese to his tall, handsome friend, who had unraveled many a mystery of the white light district. "This dame *had* pearls until a few minutes ago. Now they're gone, and she's wild!"

"All right, all right," comforted Babb. "You've probably given your press agent the gate to cut expenses and hauled out the press book of 1900 to copy from. But it's all right, Bill." He slapped the manager on the back. "I've good and sufficient reason to jump when the captain said there was something up over at the Revue and asked if I wanted to go. I'm for you and your show shop, Bill. So trot out the suspects."

"You're the original kidding copper, Babb," said Reese, "but from now on talk like they were playing 'Hearts and Flowers.' I'll tell the *World* and all the other papers this is sad. As much trouble as I've had keeping this temperamental gal in line, now that she's shy two thousand dollars' worth of oyster stones, you can imagine my lot."

Babb effusively offered his hand. "If you confess these stones are worth only two thousand smackers," he said, "instead of the $25,000 that the young men will put in the paper, I'm beginning to believe you."

"Cut that comic side spoofing, Babb," said Reese, "and grab the facts: One of our biggest numbers is 'Pearly Girlie' in the second act. In it each chorus girl wears a fine string of paste pearls. Don't ask if they also wear a smile. You get me out of this, and I'll let you inspect them from a free seat every night for a month."

"I've seen your show oftimes, Reese," said the detective. "For me it's got a particular fascination. But go on!"

"The girls *had to have* these paste pearls. Then what does this Aurora do——"

"Aurora?"

"Yes. I knew her when her name wasn't Greek for dawn. She's an importation from Hoboken—or South Bend. But no matter. She's a real hit, and we've got to jump through the hoop for her. However, on this stunt she was dawn of the morning after, with the old dark-brown taste. Just to show these poor little choristers she can

wear a *real* necklace, which looks just like theirs even to the clasp, only it's worth about $1,975 more, she goes out and buys such a one!"

The detective shook his head. The manager went on: "Buys it, wears it and, of course, doesn't keep still about it. Else what use would there be of having it? She got it to lord over these lesser skirts—or tights, I guess you'd call 'em—being out of the chorus only three years herself."

"Let's talk to her," interrupted Babb.

Reese led the way to the star's dressing-room. A finely formed brunette arrived simultaneously with them, breathless after having responded to three encores at the close of the second act. She was of that emotional type whose eccentric gift is a wonderful stage asset, but which, in private life, often plays strange pranks.

From her dazzling filmy gown stretched out two pleading hands. Her dark, passionate eyes beseeched tearfully. Babb took her hand soothingly and asked her to tell him all about it.

"I brought them in the case, as usual," said Mme. Aurora. "One of the girls dropped in and wanted to see them. I showed them to her. I was called away. I didn't look for them again until I was dressing for the 'Pearly Girlie' number. Then the case was empty."

"This girl who was looking at the pearls. She is——"

"Mae Preston, from the chorus."

"What's her record, Mr. Reese?" asked the detective.

"Excellent. I'm surprised——"

"But didn't Mme. Aurora say other girls had seen the pearls?"

"Practically all of them," wept the star. "It's such a task——"

"Who else is on the stage that might pass madame's door?" Babb asked.

"A large number of people," said Reese. "There's the stage manager and four men under him, the electrician and his helper, eight chorus men, besides the girls and half a dozen other people in support of Mme. Aurora."

"But who has admittance to her dressing-room regularly?"

"Nobody regularly, except Stella Johnson, her colored maid, and Jack Tellingham."

"Tellingham?"

"He, of course, is madame's husband."

"May I speak to the maid and Mr. Tellingham?"

The girl, a mulatto, refined and quiet, declared in excellent English that she had not noticed the absence of the pearls until she opened the case as usual to place the jewels upon the star's neck.

Babb turned to Tellingham, a broad-faced, sleek-looking man of the world, who seemed eager to aid. The detective drew the star's husband from the dressing-room and questioned him at the corner of the stage.

"What do you know about this, Mr. Tellingham?" Babb asked just as the orchestra struck up the melody introducing the third and last act.

With the air of one who has reached a conclusion after careful thought, Tellingham drew the detective back a little, and they stood in the shelter of a tall hanging piece. Girls of the chorus were packed in the wings on either side awaiting the rise of the curtain to rush upon the stage.

The opening chorus of the third act rolled up from the orchestra pit. Between them and the footlights pranced out upon the stage a long line of thinly clad girls, round, smiling, peppy; behind them the more willowy, languorous show girls of greater dignity and poise.

Dramatically Tellingham pointed. "There they go," he said, an accusing bitterness in his tones. "Forty—count 'em—forty, and every one a potential thief!"

"What do you mean?" asked Babb, a flash in his eye.

"I mean," said the other, surveying him slowly, "that the person who got the pearls is out there—one of those doll-faced girls."

"I don't believe it," retorted Babb. "I've a good opinion of chorus girls because——" He hesitated. Then he looked at the other searchingly. Slowly something about Tellingham's statement seemed to convince him. "Maybe you're right," he said. "It's worth

trying, at any rate. Tell me, on what do you base your suspicions?"

"On every woman's love of jewelry, coupled with the chance every girl in that chorus had to cop this string. Any one of them might have been found in Aurora's room without suspicion, might even have handled the pearls. That's enough to make them forty potential thieves."

"Forty thieves," mused Babb. "Then a smile, a touch of the flippancy with which he had greeted Reese, returned. "Forty Thieves!" he repeated. "Well, here's old Al Babb himself. We'll make it a real Arabian night and see who gets decorated with hot oil. Now let's get Mr. Reese, foreman of this entertainment plant."

Reese, with anxious face, crossed to meet him.

"I'm heading for a solution," Babb announced. "Can you suggest some dark, concealed place from which I can watch this chorus of forty beauties without their knowledge?"

"Do you think one of them stole the pearls?"

"Mr. Tellingham suggests it, and I think I'd better find out. How about the place?"

"This way," said Reese, and Babb nodded to Tellingham and followed. Reese led the detective up a circular flight of stairs. Twenty feet above the stage they reached a small platform from which they looked down upon the flying line of bare feminine limbs moving in animated cadence to the strains of the orchestra.

As Reese left Babb asked: "Where does this stairway lead?"

"Up into the flies. There it divides. Part crosses the stage, and another part connects with a passage to my office at the front of the house."

"Fine!" said Babb. "I'll have the culprit before the last curtain. With your permission I'll turn out this light above me so that I may be in absolute darkness."

Babb did so as Reese clanged away down the steel stairs. For a moment the detective stood looking down at the flying limbs, the bobbed hair and the smiling faces of this dashing Broadway chorus. Then, like a movie transformation, the whole swaying line was blotted out, and before him was only a "close-up." It showed the delicate blonde head and shoulders of one little maid in the front row, pertly kicking her shapely legs over the footlights and radiating at the bald heads and near-balds of the front row a smile of child-like innocence and demureness.

The third and last act was half over when Alfred Babb came down the steel stairs and approached Reese. "Has Mme. Aurora a moment now?" he asked the manager.

"Yes," said the other, seizing hope from Babb's face.

"Good!" said the detective. "Please have her go to her dressing-room at once—and I'd like a witness. Tellingham will do. I'll be with you in a minute."

Babb hurried off down another pair of steel stairs, those leading below stage. Less than a minute had passed when he knocked at the door of the star's dressing-room, then entered, his hand upon the unwilling arm of a small chorus girl, the slender, delicately beautiful girl from the front row upon whose dancing figure his eyes had dropped some time before.

"With your permission, Mme. Aurora," said Babb, "we'll put on a little third degree here that probably will turn up the thief. Have you ever showed this girl your pearls?"

"She is—Miss—er—Miss——"

"Madge Layton," Babb supplied.

"Not that I recall. I don't know her."

"But *you* knew Mme. Aurora had a valuable string of pearls," charged Babb, an accusing finger pointed at the girl.

"I'd heard of her pearls," said the girl with a pretty sullenness, "but I didn't take them."

"You didn't, eh? Didn't try to pass them out the stage door to a man?"

The girl's hand trembled. She went a trifle paler. "N—no," she faltered.

"You haven't done two terms up the river, and you don't know a fellow named Squinty Doyle?"

"N—no, I didn't," said the girl, her voice trembling.

"Well," accused Babb, drawing closer, his eyes peering into hers, "you did steal them,

and a few minutes, while I was watching you and you couldn't see me, you betrayed yourself."

The girl's lips were trembling. She could scarcely speak loud as she said: "I don't—I don't know what you mean."

"You soon will. Mme. Aurora, may I have your aid?"

"Certainly."

"Here's how the case stands: We headed off this girl's attempt to pass out the pearls, and we've searched her baggage. She's been watched carefully, and I don't think she's planted the jewels around the theatre. That leaves but one hypothesis. She must have them on her. As I've only a man working with me, will you be so kind as to see if she has the pearls hidden about her clothing?"

Madge Layton's trembling mouth curled into a sob. Tears rolled down her cheeks, and she shrank from the touch of the star. The latter, however, filled with eagerness to get back her lost property, quickly went over the weeping girl from her small slippers to the filmy draperies which clung to her breast. Suddenly Aurora gave a cry as her fingers met something.

As quickly Madge Layton was fighting like a little tigress. Dodging beneath their hands she was flying for the door until Alfred Babb caught her in his strong arms and, smilingly dodging her flying dimpled fists, brought her back.

With satisfaction Babb nodded to Mme. Aurora. "You almost had them," he said. "Try again."

With the detective's help the star brought forth from their concealment in the front of the chorus girl's dress a strand of shimmering pearls.

"They're mine!" cried Mme. Aurora. "At least—they look like mine."

"I've provided for that," said Babb. "To make sure there's been no switch my assistant went out to one of those Broadway jewelry stores, that keep open all evening, after a jeweler. He's probably back by now."

Babb opened the door and beckoned another man in plain clothes. The latter, in turn, ushered in a sharp-looking man with a black mustache. To him Babb passed the string of pearls. The man examined the stones carefully, then turned back to the group.

"I don't know what the information's for," he said, turning a puzzled face at the two women who watched him so eagerly. "But this is a string of genuine pearls worth—well, perhaps a couple of thousand dollars."

"Just as I suspected," said Babb as he took the pearls and passed them back to the star. "But the true story of why this girl stole them hasn't come out as yet."

He looked over the little group about the weeping girl with a bit of hesitation. Then he said: "I wonder if the rest of you would mind stepping out? If I can have this girl alone with Mme. Aurora a few minutes I think she may talk."

Tellingham, the other detective, and the man who had passed upon the pearls, withdrew. For a moment Babb stood looking at the broken figure of the girl, who had dropped into a chair, continuing to sob softly.

Then he said: "We've only a short time, Miss Layton. Mme. Aurora must go on again in—how long, madame?"

"In eight minutes. I'll need three of those minutes for my change."

"That gives us, Miss Layton," said Babb, "just five minutes in which to tell Mme. Aurora why you stole her pearls. Won't you tell her the truth, rather than be locked up with a lie upon your lips?"

At the suggestion of jail the girl shrunk from him, terror in her eyes. The detective turned back to the star and shook his head.

"She's a girl who really never had a chance, madame," said Babb, with just a hint of pleading in his voice. "Up the river twice—at her age. Truly it's a shame!"

"It is, indeed," said the other woman, whose emotional nature gave her an impulsive, almost soft heart. "My pearls are back, and I don't really feel like pushing the prosecution. But, as you say, it's wrong for her to hold back the truth. If she would be willing to tell——"

"Come, Miss Layton," said Babb in kindly tones: "Madame Aurora is disposed to

be lenient. If you need the money I'll loan you some—just to prove that the police are not the hard-hearted bloodhounds they're sometimes made out. Come, we won't be hard upon you if you will tell us the truth."

"I have told the truth," said the girl, breaking out crying afresh.

"You haven't told us why you took them," said Babb firmly. "Come now, tell us the truth and——"

There was a sharp knock at the door.

"The truth," said Madge Layton, "the truth is——"

"Come!" called Babb sharply.

The door opened and three men entered. They were the same three men who had left only a moment before. Reese, the manager of the theatre, followed. Mme. Aurora gasped as she saw the face of Tellingham, her husband, and looked from his face downward at his shackled wrists.

"The truth is, madame," Babb finished, "your husband stole the pearls!"

The dark eyes of the actress blinked dumbly. She gasped inarticulately, astonished and still incredulous.

"Mr. Gordon, from headquarters," said Babb, introducing the man who recently had passed upon the pearls. "Tell Mme. Aurora what happened, Jim."

"When Tellingham left this room," said the other detective, "he left us also and hurried across the street to the jeweler. He had the real pearls, but was in a panic to know if they were genuine, after all, having been deceived by our little fake identification stunt. We anticipated his move, of course, and I got in a side door ahead of him. As the jeweler pronounced the pearls real, I came up from behind the counter and slipped on the nippers."

Aurora, who was clinging half-doubtingly to the neck of her husband, found voice to gasp: "But this girl——"

Again Babb was the smiling man who had joked with Reese. "Your husband," he explained, "attacked the chorus girls—called this crowd in particular forty thieves. So old Al Babb decided to use the 'thieves' to show a real thief just how much of a fool Tellingham, alias Travers, alias then some, could make of him. And I'm glad, lady, it was you, not Dave Belasco, who saw the little girl do her acting, or maybe she'd still get her name in electric lights instead of flopping my eggs and darning my socks forever and aye—beginning next May!"

"Kidding again, Babb?" asked Reese.

"Not on your spot-light! I said when I first came in that I had good and sufficient reason to jump when the captain said something was doing over at the Revue. Madge Layton was that reason, and I never mentioned her to you because I don't want her signed by one of you impresarios before she signs for life with me. This guy made crude efforts to shift suspicion, and happened to trample on the slippers of my intended—and her little toesies were in 'em!"

"I understand, but——"

Babb grabbed the manager by the arm and explained: "I didn't stand up there in the dark long. I hustled up front and got busy checking up the males as well as the females about this theatre. Question: Who needed money and was willing to steal? Answer: Tellingham, whom your star married less than a month ago after an overnight courtship, a fellow who never worked, who's known on three continents as 'Flourish Travers,' a gambler. Question: How to make him show up the stones—and you saw how I did it. Now what do I do? Lock him up or get a good bawling out from Mme. Aurora?"

The Brass Button

by Edgar Daniel Kramer

ON this June morning the humidity struck me as being almost unbearable in the police station. The air was so hot that it seemed to burn me as I breathed it in. I was completely fagged out and my nerves were ready to go to smash as I slumped down upon the low wooden bench in front of my locker. Kearney, a brother policeman, was already in his street clothes when I entered the locker-room.

"Hello, Torsch!" he greeted me cheerfully in his big voice.

"Go to the deuce!" I snapped.

He stared at me strangely for a moment, or at least I thought he did, then he swung upon his heel and climbed the stairs.

"Crazy with the heat, I reckon, the poor devil!" I could hear him mumbling in time to his steps.

After the heat of the streets it was refreshingly cool there in the shadows. I stretched out my legs and rested my back against my locker. Then I discovered that one of the brass buttons was missing from the front of my coat. That brought me up with a round turn. It was a trifle, but it got me just the same. Hunched forward, my aching head between my hands, I racked my brains in an effort to determine just where that bit of gilt brass might be. Time ticked away. I continued to squat there without making any effort to change into my street clothes.

"Dead or dreaming?"

I looked up, startled out of my thoughts. Kearney had come back and was standing in front of me.

"Hey! What's eating you, anyway?" he asked. "You look like a man who's been seeing things that ain't."

"Shut up!" I snarled.

"The chief wants to see you, Torsch," he told me.

"What's that?"

"The inspector's waiting to see you in his office."

"Trailor wants me?" I queried.

"That's the merry word," Kearney laughed, striding across the room and pausing on the first step. "He's in a hurry, too. I wouldn't keep the old man waiting, Torsch."

Then he was gone. I got to my feet wearily and climbed the stairs with dragging steps. I was still buttoning my coat when I entered Inspector Trailor's office. He sat at his lesk busily writing. The

scratching of his pen made my nerves jump. He kept on with his work, and I stood staring down at his massive gray head.

"Good-morning, Torsch!" Trailor looked up. "Just a minute. I have to get this letter into the next mail."

"Good-morning, inspector," I answered. "I'm off duty. There's lots of time."

Finally he tossed his pen away, folded and sealed the letter and deposited it in the mail-chute near his desk.

"When did you get in, Torsch?" he asked abruptly, settling his bulky frame back in his chair and fixing his gray eyes upon me.

"About an hour ago," I replied, not a little surprised, when I caught sight of the clock on the wall behind Trailor. "Just about an hour ago," I repeated.

"You were relieved at seven?"

"Yes," I answered. "Flood relieved me at seven."

"And you came right in?"

"Directly."

"When did you arrive here?" Trailor questioned.

"Seven-thirty."

"It's now eight-thirty." Trailor glanced up at the clock. "You are still in uniform. What have you been doing?"

"I was pretty well all in, inspector," I explained. "The heat's got me, I'm afraid. I was down in the locker-room. I went there as soon as I came in. Kearney was there. I must have dozed off. The next thing I knew Kearney was telling me that you wanted to see me. I came right up. It's cool in the locker-room. I must have been napping the last hour."

Trailor ran his hands through his grizzled hair, as was a custom of his, and shifted his position slightly.

"What occurred on your beat last night, Torsch?"

"Nothing," I replied.

"Nothing?"

"Nothing."

"Absolutely nothing, Torsch?" Trailor leaned forward a bit, his face troubled, a perplexed wrinkle between his eyes.

"Nothing out of the ordinary, that is," I answered. "The usual coming and going of folks."

"That all?"

"Towneley came home in a taxi," I went on, "but that's nothing at all unusual."

"When did Towneley get in last night?"

"It was this morning," I corrected, "about four."

"Any one with him?"

"No."

"What was his condition, Torsch?"

"A bit unsteady, inspector," I replied. "I came around the corner just as the taxi drove away. The going was not any too easy for Towneley, so I helped him with the garden gate and steadied him along the path and up the steps. He had some difficulty in unlocking the door, but he finally got inside."

"When did you see him again?"

"I haven't seen him since."

"Very well, Torsch." Trailor spoke softly. "You may go."

I swung around and hurried to the door. Something seemed to be actually driving me out of that room. I was still wondering what had become of the missing button. The scratching of Trailor's pen as he resumed his writing came to me.

"Torsch!" Trailor called after me.

I paused with my hand on the knob.

"By the way"—he addressed me as though the thought had just come to him—"have you heard that Towneley was murdered early this morning?"

"Murdered!" I gasped.

Trailor nodded.

"He had it coming to him, inspector," I muttered through dry lips. "If there ever was a devil, he was one."

"I've just come from up there," Trailor went on, seemingly oblivious to my remark. "I thought you might help me."

"And he's dead?" I questioned in a voice that seemed strange to me.

"He's that," the inspector answered grimly.

As I stood there in Trailor's office in my mind's eye I could see the old-fashioned, ivy-covered house set back in the deep garden through which I had helped Towneley just a few hours earlier. The fragrance of phlox and mignonette came back to me. I could see Towneley, too, a slight, sandy-

haired, ruddy-faced fellow with cold, steel-blue eyes. I recalled the things that were said of him: his skill at cards, his uncanny gambling instincts, his plunging propensities, his many affairs with women. All in all, he was the kind of a chap a he-man just itches to wallop, while women fall for him as recklessly as flies succumb to the lure of honey.

"Last night Towneley attended the Century Roof." Trailor was talking, and I suddenly came to myself. "From two to three-thirty or thereabouts he and his party danced at the Palais Royale. At seven-thirty his housekeeper, arriving somewhat earlier than usual, found the front door unlocked and Towneley, dressed in blue silk pajamas, sitting in an armchair by the table in his drawing-room—dead as a door-nail—with a bullet through his head."

"Suicide, inspector?" I asked.

"The woman called up headquarters," Trailor went on, ignoring my question. "I hurried up there. A bullet fired from an army automatic, a forty-five, had blown off the top of Towneley's head. I found the bullet embedded in the wall behind the dead man and about two feet above the baseboard. The forty-five, with an exploded cartridge in one chamber, lay on the floor under his right hand, as though it had slipped from his clutch. Towneley was slumped back in the chair, a look of startled surprise and horror upon his features, like a man who has glimpsed a ghost. On the table, as though tossed there hastily, lay a yellow and much-thumbed letter and envelope completely torn across. The murdered man's left hand was tightly clenched, as if he were about to deliver a blow."

"Looks like Towneley killed himself," I suggested.

"It struck me that way at first," Trailor continued, "but Mrs. Miles—she's the housekeeper—tells me that Towneley was left-handed."

"He was left-handed?" I asked quickly.

"That's what the woman said," Trailor replied. "How did the gun get under his right hand? The murderer, who was not intimately acquainted with his victim, put it there. Being right-handed himself, he instinctively assumed that Towneley was right-handed, too." Trailor paused. "Furthermore, the position of the bullet in the wall indicates that it was not only fired from in front of Towneley, but also from above by some one leaning over the startled man as he cringed away from his slayer. That ends the suicide theory, Torsch."

"Some woman settled him, I reckon, inspector," I spoke hoarsely. "The good Lord knows there were plenty of them who had cause to!"

"Here's the letter," Trailor explained. "It's much-thumbed and almost illegible in spots. There is no date, no signature. Even the postmark on the envelope has disappeared. The letter reads:

"'If there is a God in Heaven you will pay for the suffering you have brought to me and mine. You have cast me off. There is the river.' . . .

That's all I am able to make out," Trailor ended.

With a faraway look in his eyes Trailor folded the bit of yellowed paper and carefully replaced it in its worn envelope.

"Queer things happen, inspector!" I began excitedly, my brain all fire. "Maybe that girl had strength enough to come back and square things with Mr. Towneley."

"Phony stuff, that, Torsch," Trailor laughed mirthlessly. "That stuff may go strong in stories and in the movies, but not in real life. Most likely some one to whom the girl meant a great deal squared things for her, and I know the man."

"Some one squared things for her?" I asked.

"Yes."

"And you know the man, inspector?"

"I know the man," he echoed.

I stumbled closer to the desk.

"Steady, Torsch!" Trailor's voice came to me as though from a great distance.

"And you know the man, inspector?" I repeated, my brain suddenly clearing and my nerves ceasing to jump.

Trailor was now at my side, his hand on my shoulder in a friendly, man-to-man sort of way.

"Why did you kill Towneley, Torsch?" he asked, and his voice had become very kind.

"Me? Kill Towneley?" I blustered.

"Come clean, Torsch."

"The girl," I choked, "the girl who wrote that letter disappeared five years ago. When Towneley called me into his house early this morning he was a sneering devil gloating over the women he had injured. He told me things in his drunken exuberance. He showed me that letter. He showed me pictures. Then I found out what I have been trying to learn for five years. He had been cleaning and loading his forty-five. I grabbed it. I had sense enough in my rage not to use my own gun. He grappled with me. I flung him off and—I croaked him. I'd do it again, inspector, for Towneley was a dog. That girl was my sister!"

"We will let dead dogs sleep, Torsch," Trailor answered, his eyes bright with sympathetic understanding.

"What do you mean?" I gasped.

"Just this," Trailor replied with a wry smile, "the Towneley murder is going to be one of the few crimes that proved too baffling for Inspector Trailor and the police department. Something tells me that it is never going to be solved."

He extended his hand. I took it, and we stood for a little while looking deep into each other's hearts.

"You'll be needing this, Torsch," Trailor spoke huskily. "I found it tightly clutched in the left hand of Towneley. Get it back where it belongs, and I wouldn't waste much time if I were in your shoes in doing it."

And he handed me the brass button that was missing from the front of my uniform coat!

A MYSTERIOUS TRUNK

THE adventure of the trunk with the hundred compartments is really a New York police story, but the secret service operatives were keenly interested in it, just the same. The regularity with which opium is brought into the metropolis interests not only the darkest part of Chinatown, but some other more frequented and more public localities. The scene of the drama was a three-story brownstone house on East Fourteenth street. The house had been under suspicion for some time, but nothing might have come of it if Charles Rizzo, alias Charley Jones, had not gone "up the river" for being concerned in $15,000 worth of stolen feathers.

While Charley was on his way to Sing Sing a tall, slim young fellow was seen to enter the brownstone house. He carried a big key dangling from the end of his little finger. That key proved to be his undoing. The moment he entered the house two officers followed him on tiptoes. The youth with the key walked through the hall to the rear of the house and then went down the back stairs to the basement. He put the key into a hole in a doorway and entered a room, bolting it after him. After about three minutes he came out whistling and swinging the key. The officer halted him with a pointed pistol.

"Harris," he said gently, "I think I need you in my business."

"I'm not Harris, and I don't know you," was the jaunty response.

"You're Flying Harris, and I know it. Now come to time."

After some parleying Harris reopened the door with the key and the detectives entered the room. In the corner was a trunk with brass bands about it. It proved to have one hundred separate compartments filled with opium, cocaine and other narcotics. Flying Harris was arrested and the opium confiscated.

The police believe that with this arrest they broke up one of the most dangerous drug gangs in the United States. The chief offender is now in the Atlanta penitentiary and others are still awaiting trial.

A Divided Duty

by Anne Harris Hadley

THERE was an undercurrent of excitement beneath the polished exterior of the South American as he entered the Metropolitan Club, to which he held a guest card. Once inside, Senor Alvarez made his way to the grill for the purpose of ordering a belated breakfast. He was hungry, worn from a sleepless night and an anxiety which grew no less as the hours passed and the police made no apparent progress.

He had confided to them only the meagre facts that in his absence his safe had been opened, and the comparatively small amount of cash it contained was taken, and that his Japanese manservant, Toky, was missing.

The most important thing—the most terrible thing—he had not mentioned. That was a State matter, one requiring the closest secrecy.

The police were working on the theory that Toky, the Jap, had robbed his master and fled. Well, they were wrong, Senor Alvarez was sure of that, and he had told them as much. But something must be done.

As he stared unseeingly at the menu card which the waiter had placed before him he became aware that a callboy passing through the room was repeating his name in the singsong voice peculiar to callboys. Alvarez beckoned to the boy.

"I am Senor Alvarez," he said.

"Phone call for you, sir," the boy replied.

Hurrying to the phone, Senor Alvarez heard the voice of an excited man at the other end of the line:

"Police department. We have found your servant, senor," the voice announced. "At least we think that is who he is, and the chief would be obliged if you would come down and identify the body."

"The body? Toky dead? The body, you say? This is dreadful."

"It is that, sir," agreed the policeman. "And the gardener that found him is about crazy. You see, he was changing the flowers in Thomas Circle this morning and putting in new ones, and when he started to take up that bed of big yellow cannas just back of Webster's statue—you know, in the little park just west of the Circle—well, just as he was about to dig up the first plant he noticed that a number of them were trampled down, and he looked, and right in the middle of the bed he saw a body. And such a yell as he let out. It is a wonder you didn't hear him yourself. I was on duty there around the Circle and ran over when I heard him yell. We got the body out.

Then I called headquarters, and they told me to get you to come and identify it, sir. The body is being taken to the morgue."

"All right," said Senor Alvarez, "I will come immediately," and leaving the phone he hurried away breakfastless.

The body proved to be that of his missing servant. A crushed skull indicated that he had been struck down by a terrible blow of some heavy blunt instrument.

Having finished his disagreeable duties at the morgue as quickly as possible, Alvarez determined to seek help immediately from a source other than the police.

Hurrying out to the street, he hailed a taxi, gave an address, and a few moments later was ushered into the office of Detective Peter McEachin, the most astute reader of mysteries on two continents.

Peter McEachin was Scotch and evidently so, but instead of showing the thin, spare appearance usually attributed to men of his profession, McEachin was of medium height, a normal-looking, blue-eyed man with a kindly face and a form suggestive of increasing rotundity.

"Senor," said McEachin, when his visitor had taken the chair the detective indicated, "pardon my frankness. I know your mission. I have just read an account of the robbery at your house last night, but the case as set forth in the morning papers does not appeal to me."

"Just a word, please," put in Alvarez at this point. "The things you have read in the papers"—leaning forward and lowering his voice—"are comparatively small matters. I am sincerely grieved by Toky's death, but that, too, is aside from the main point. Though not officially connected with my country's legation, I am in my country's service. When I came to Washington a few days ago I brought secretly a certain paper. Fearing to trust it even to the vaults of a bank, I concealed it in a hidden compartment of the safe from which the money was taken."

"Ah!" said McEachin softly, a gleam of interest showing in his face.

"The safe itself was ordinary enough in appearance, being of the small square steel variety which you can see anywhere," continued Alvarez, "but the compartment was so cuningly devised, and so well-concealed, that even after their thorough search of the premises the police do not suspect its existence, yet that paper is missing from it.

"It is necessary that it be found at once. The writing is in cipher code, and I am convinced there is not a key in Washington. We, who have a right to know its contents, have memorized the code. There is no copy in this part of the world. The paper must be recovered before it is deciphered. In the hands of certain parties a knowledge of its contents might shake the financial stability of my country. That is why I have come to you."

While Senor Alvarez talked Peter McEachin's expression of polite indifference changed to one of deep attention.

"In that case," he said as the diplomat ceased speaking, "my duty, as well as my interest, urges me to aid you. Tell me all about it. I know only what the newspapers have said."

"Last night," began Senor Alvarez, "I attended a reception at the Legation, and returned home after one o'clock. I let myself in with a latch-key, and as I closed the street door my eyes fell upon a sheet of paper lying at my feet. I picked it up, and was astonished to find that it was one of a number forming a report which I had placed in my safe earlier in the day.

"I called my manservant, Toky, and ran upstairs. There was no answer, and Toky did not appear. The upper hall was in darkness, but as I pressed the button, flooding the hall with light, other sheets of paper scattered on the floor met my eyes. I almost ran the short distance from the head of the stairs to the large front room I use as a living-room. The light streaming in from the hall showed me an overturned chair, and on the floor a confusion of papers, the source of the scattered sheets I had already encountered.

"My safe stands against the wall, almost behind the open door. It was wide open. Papers and documents littered the floor. The scarf that Toky had laid across the top of the safe was pulled half off, overturning a queer green vase which stood upon it.

"The thought gripped me like a terror that possibly the paper which I had so carefully concealed in the secret drawer was missing. My imagination must have run riot about then, for it almost seemed as if the rising sun, painted on the vase, grinned in derision at me as I sank on my knees, fumbling for the hidden spring." The expressive face of the Latin was tense and white as he reached his climax. "The secret compartment was empty."

"Yes," said McEachin. "Go on."

"When I had assured myself beyond doubt that the paper was indeed missing I examined every drawer in the safe. In several papers and trinkets remained, and a package of negotiable bonds had been left, but everywhere was confusion. Papers were scattered around, some torn and crumpled, their condition indicating that they had been hastily scanned and thrown aside, as of no value to the searcher. I looked them all over. Nothing was missing except that one paper—that and the money. It seems evident to me that the thief had come for the specific purpose of procuring that paper. Possibly he took the money as a blind."

McEachin nodded noncommittally, and the South American continued:

"A glance at my bedroom showed that it, too, had been ransacked. Every drawer and closet had been searched. Clothes were strewn about, and even the covers had been torn from the bed. A cyclone would have caused scarcely greater confusion, but apparently nothing else had been taken.

"Toky's room on the floor above was undisturbed. His belongings were there, but he was nowhere to be seen. A search of the ground floor revealed the rear door left ajar and the back gate unlatched. It looked as if the three, the document, the money, and Toky, might have vanished in thin air, but that Toky robbed me is unbelievable. Not for an instant would I credit such an idea.

"After I had looked the place over pretty thoroughly I went down to the nearest drugstore and called the police. Possibly you know I arrived in Washington only three days ago and took this furnished house on N street, just off 16th, and I have not yet succeeded in having a telephone installed." Then Senor Alvarez went on to tell of the finding of his servant's body in the canna bed, adding: "And from the morgue I came direct to you. That is the whole story so far as I know it, but if there is any point I have not made clear I will gladly answer any questions you care to ask. The missing money and documents were not in the possession of the dead Jap."

"Tell me why you are so firmly convinced of the innocence of this servant of yours. Might he not have been killed in a quarrel over the spoils? He could have given the papers to a pal. Why are you so sure he is innocent?" asked McEachin.

"Because," replied the senor, "I have known him for six years, and have found him absolutely trustworthy; because I took him from poverty, from a life of ill treatment and heart-breaking labor on a tramp steamer in the Indian Ocean, and he was truly grateful. He was not only grateful, but I believe the queer little fellow really loved me. I think the strongest feelings in his odd little soul were affection for me and for his country."

"For his country?" said McEachin reflectively. "For his country? Is Japan interested in this missing paper?"

"Only incidentally. It is of more concern to England or to some of our neighboring countries of South America. There are individuals in Japan—financiers—who would profit greatly by a knowledge of its contents, but not that nation itself. The document contains the terms of an international agreement between my country and Brazil concerning some timber lands along the border. There is a great corporation financed largely by foreign capital and this corporation is attempting to secure operating rights. If they could learn just what the terms of this agreement are the knowledge, at this time, would be worth millions to them, but might shake the financial structure of our newly organized government."

"Ah," murmured McEachin softly, "the Liebstein-Intashi gang without doubt."

The South American nodded gravely.

After a moment's pause McEachin said:

"You are sure Toky would not have robbed you—not even for Japan?"

"But Japan is not involved."

"Has he any friends—have you seen him talking to anybody?" questioned McEachin, shifting his line of questioning abruptly.

"So far as I know he has not an acquaintance in Washington, and the only people I have seen him talk to since our arrival have been the tradesmen who come to the door, and a persistent Mexican pedler, whom I saw him about to put bodily into the street day before yesteday as I came home."

The two men sat in silence for a long moment, then McEachin, leaning forward, said simply, "I will do my best for you senor."

Senor Alvarez thanked him and rose.

For the next few days Senor Alvarez saw no signs of progress being made. Eagerly and fearfully he scanned the financial sheet of each paper as it came out, dreading to see from the trend of the stock market that the master thieves, the manipulators of the great corporation, had begun striking at the financial life of his country.

The police and the government secret service men had found nothing. McEachin he could not locate. That deceptive looking person was ever on the move, and had always just gone out, or had not yet come in, when Senor Alvarez attempted to get in communication with him.

It was the third day after the robbery and the senor's nerves were on edge. As was his daily custom, he stopped by the legation for any possible news. There he learned that McEachin had left a phone call for him a few minutes previously. Two minutes later he had McEachin on the other end of the wire.

"It's all right!" McEachin's exultant voice was saying. "I've got the paper, seals unbroken. Great luck! Come on down to my office and get the precious thing. It worries me, the responsibility of taking care of it. I have most of that five hundred, too. And the scoundrels who took it are under arrest."

Senor Alvarez violated the speed limit in getting to McEachin's office. He could hardly restrain his eagerness as McEachin handed him the fateful document, somewhat crumpled, rather dirty, but with seals unbroken. After examining it carefully to assure himself that no mistake had been made, and that it was indeed the document he desired, Senor Alvarez placed it carefully in an inner pocket.

"Wonderful!" he said; "won't you please tell me how you accomplished it?"

"Well," said McEachin simply and yet with a certain satisfaction, "to begin with, we knew that the money was gone and the paper was gone, and that Toky had been murdered. His guilt or innocence at that stage in the solution was merely a matter for speculation.

"After you had gone I tried to figure out a theory that would cover all the known facts. The confusion in which you found your house convinced me that it could not have been a simple case of your servant and some accomplices robbing you, and then quarreling over the spoils. That would account for Toky's death all right, but not for the confusion. Even if Toky had not known where the paper was kept, he would have had ample opportunity to search the house in your absence. A servant with plenty of time would search carefully, thoroughly, putting things to rights behind him. He would never have upset chiffonier drawers and overturned chairs as did the persons who ransacked your house. The only explanation of the condition in which you found things was haste, frantic haste, and there would have been no occasion for Toky to display such haste. That inclined me to believe that it was an outside job. You get my point?"

Senor Alvarez nodded, and McEachin went on:

"On your departure you had left both paper and money in the safe. The safe was doubtless the first place the thieves would search. If they had found what they were looking for there, why then should they have wasted precious time tearing your house upside-down? Naturally they would not have done so, and I was driven to the

conclusion that they had not found what they were looking for in the safe.

"But it was gone when you returned. You had put in there. They had not found it, so at least I reasoned, and it was gone when you returned. The obvious conclusion was that someone else had taken it. Who? Toky?

"I did not know, but he surely had a better opportunity than anyone else. He seemed the logical suspect. It was quite within the bounds of the probable that he had solved the combination, which you say was comparatively simple. And these Orientals have an uncanny aptitude for locating secret places. It is born in them, and has been trained into them through thousands of years of dealing with shifty, secret things."

Senor Alvarez started to protest, but McEachin continued:

"Why should Toky remove it? Either he was a rogue, and was stealing it for some purpose of his own, or he had reason to believe the paper was not secure where you had concealed it, and he removed it for safer keeping. Either was possible, but your unshaken belief in his innocence and devotion to you made me decide to work along the latter line first.

"Assuming, then, for the sake of hypothesis, that Toky was innocent, I reasoned that he must have become aware, in some way, that the paper was about to be stolen, for that was the only logical way I could explain an honest Toky taking the paper from your safe. He must have known—how, I could not then tell—of this attempt about to be made to get possession of the paper. And knowing your interests were in danger, he made an attempt to protect them.

"You said that Toky was clever as well as devoted. Given a clever and devoted Japanese, with some knowledge of an attempt to be made at stealing from his master; given also assurance that the thieves had difficulty in getting the document, the possibility suggested itself naturally that after removing the paper Toky had concealed it so successfully that they had not succeeded in finding it. If this were true, then the paper was probably still where Toky had hidden it. That was a possibility worth following out, and my next move was to decide where Toky would hide such a thing under those circumstances.

"I went to your house—you had given me a key—and I tried to put myself in Toky's place. I tried to get his mental attitude, to imagine myself your servant, utterly devoted to you and to old Japan. I did not know Toky, and you had told me his two strongest feelings. What would I do if you were about to be robbed, robbed of a paper to whose safe delivery your honor was pledged? Warn you? But he had not done that. Possibly there was no opportunity to give warning, I reasoned. That he removed the paper to a safer place seemed to fit in with all the ascertained facts, like parts of a picture puzzle when they are arranged in proper order. I felt sure I was on the right track.

"Still trying to imagine myself Toky, I went up to Toky's room, searched it thoroughly, but found nothing. I sat down on Toky's bed and wondered how to save my master. Then I found myself wandering down the stairs to stand in front of the safe, just staring and wondering, wondering where the safest place in the world could be. I raised my eyes, and they met the sardonic gaze of the image painted on that odd, narrow-neck green vase—the rising sun—the emblem of Japan. I remembered that you had noticed it when you searched the safe. Poor Toky—was it typical—the emblem of his country, and the treasure of his master? Then I picked up the vase. The notion was odd, fantastic, but possible, and, best of all, it was Oriental. Why not trust the fate of my master to the care of the rising sun for safety? I looked down the neck of the vase.

"There was something inside. The neck was too narrow to admit my hand. I carried the vase over to the light. With great care I removed its contents. It was the agreement, somewhat crumpled, but the seals unbroken."

"What a marvelous instinct you had," exclaimed Senor Alvarez as his hand stole to the inner pocket where the recovered document lay.

"Not marvelous at all," smiled McEachin. "It is mostly the art of mentally putting yourself in the other fellow's place. If you can get his mental attitude, it isn't hard to guess what he would do, especially when there is always a fact bobbing up to hit you in the face when you are on the wrong track. Just get the other fellow's mental slant, and do not ignore any known fact. With that prescription and a little patience nine-tenths of the criminal mysteries could be solved."

"Neverthless is seems marvelous," declared Senor Alvarez; "but please go on. You say you have the murderers under arrest. How did you find them?"

"I merely followed the same prescription, and tried to put myself in the mental attitude of the men who had attempted to get the paper. It was logical to believe they knew Toky had removed the paper, and they no doubt were aware that you thought it stolen."

Then, as Senor Alvarez raised his head in unspoken question, McEachin laughed outright.

"How?" questioned McEachin for him. "Simple enough. They might have guessed it by merely watching you. A man like you doesn't go around looking as if he had seen a ghost, and refusing all invitations just because he has lost five hundred dollars. Not even the loss of Toky could explain your actions to a discerning mind." McEachin smiled broadly at the diplomat's astonishment.

"No. They could have pretty good reason for thinking you did not know any more than they did of the whereabouts of the agreement. What then more reasonable than that the precious document was just where Toky had hidden it? I believe I should have reasoned that way had I been in their places. A second attempt on the house was simple enough. It was not guarded, for you thought there was nothing more of great importance in it to tempt thieves. They could easily have found out that you are there very little, and that every afternoon this week you have spent at your legation."

Senor Alvarez looked surprised that McEachin should know this fact, but remembering that McEachin called him by phone at that place, he did not interrupt.

"What, then, is more simple and logical than that they should slip in one afternoon and try their luck at discovering Toky's hiding place? That is what I would have done, and I judged their heads work somewhat as mine does. So I sent a couple of plainclothes men down there, and left them on guard. It was merely a matter of time.

"This afternoon we caught them red-handed—a Mexican named Mandez, the same pedler whom you saw Toky about to put into the street as you were returning home, and a smooth-tongued Jap. It did not take much persuasion to get the whole story from the Mexican.

"They had told Toky that possession of your document was essential to the well-being of Japan. Toky did not wish to harm you, but they convinced him, so Mandez says, that they would make it appear as if ordinary thieves had robbed the safe. They promised that they would burn or destroy other paper, leaving charred embers so that you would believe the precious agreement had been destroyed by thieves who did not know its value. You would not be severely censured, they assured him, as your Government would not know the paper had actually fallen into other hands. Mind you, Toky thought it was to be used for the secret purposes of the High Government of Tokio and that no one else would know what it contained. Toky was finally convinced that his duty to his country demanded that he sacrifice your interests.

"He at last admitted to them that the paper was kept in your safe, and that you would be away at a certain time. Arrangements were made for them to come and get the paper. Between the time of their departure and the time set for their return, something, I don't know what, aroused Toky's suspicions."

"I think I can explain that," interrupted the senor. "That evening just before starting out I had been writing a letter, and in it I made the statement that a knowledge of the contents of the agreement would be

of value only to that group of unscrupulous financiers. The letter, unfinished, was left in my desk when I went out. Toky, looking for information, must have read it."

"Probably," said McEachin.

"When the two men returned," the detective went on, "they gave the prearranged signal from without, but Toky failed to answer it, or make any move to admit them, as he had agreed to do. They had seen you depart, they said, and felt sure there was no one in the house. After waiting a while, the Mexican stole around to the rear door to see if he could find out what was detaining Toky, and came upon him attempting to steal out the back way. Realizing that he was giving them the slip Mandez seized a stick of wood lying close at hand and as Toky came by struck him down with it. He swears he did not intend to kill him. Then the other Jap appeared on the scene. They searched the body, but found nothing of value. Then the brilliant thought struck Hishoyeti, the Jap, that if Toky was missing suspicion must inevitably fasten upon him as the probable thief, so they held the body upright between them, as if it were a drunken man, carried it out, and deposited it, unnoticed, in the flower bed.

"And just to think," went on McEachin in his odd, parenthetical way, "if the park gardener had not chosen that particular day to change the flowers in that bed there is no telling how long the body might have lain there, within fifteen feet of dozens of passersby, and would not have been discovered.

"After disposing of the body they returned and searched your secret compartment and all, but the paper was not in it, so Mandez took your money—for his trouble, he said. Then they ransacked your house, searching for the paper which they were convinced was somewhere within its walls, but up to the time they heard you approach, something after midnight, they had not succeeded in finding it.

"Just as you entered the door they heard voices, probably of some belated pedestrians in the street, and thinking you were bringing friends with you, they fled.

"The rest you know—all but poor little Toky's struggle between his duty as he saw it to his country and his duty to you. Those struggles we can only imagine."

Senor Alvarez's left fingers stole to his pocket and rested on the fateful paper, while his right reached out and clasped McEachin's hand in a silent clasp of gratitude.

In his heart was a great relief. The paper was safe. In his heart there was also a great pity for the faithful little Oriental and his struggles over what had seemed to him a divided duty.

"TRUSTIES" USE OLD DEATH CELLS

"TRUSTIES" at Sing Sing hereafter will use the cells in the old death house principally because the cell block at Sing Sing Prison is crowded, but also because of convenience, it was announced at the prison recently. Under present conditions guards have to keep a careful watch on the cell block when "trusties," who are permitted to remain out of their cells longer than most of the convicts, are returned to them at the end of their day's duties. The watch is necessary to prevent prisoners getting out of their cells and hiding away in the prison awaiting a favorable opportunity to escape, something which has been attempted many times.

By using the cells in the old death house "trusties" can come and go without danger to the other men in the prison, as the death house is isolated from the cell block.

Another use that has been found for the old death house is that of a reception-room, where the newly arrived will give their pedigrees and get their physical examinations. For this purpose the old execution chamber will be utilized, the chair having been removed under cover of darkness to the new death house.

Crime Detection in France

By CARL H. GETZ

CRIMINOLOGISTS of England and Continental Europe declare that the United States is lagging behind more and more in the science of crime detection, while the countries of Europe are making greater strides to-day than ever. Criminologists of Europe years ago pointed out how psychological and physiological means of detecting crime were being used in Europe, and at that time were practically unheard of in this country. To-day psychology, physiology and sociology are known sciences in most police circles, and their application to crime detection is pretty well understood. But to-day in Europe crime detection is changing into the science of crime prevention.

Only recently one of the leading criminologists of Austria before a congress of sociologists in Vienna made these statements:

"Europe has long appreciated the value of psychology and sociology in detecting crime and in obtaining evidence with which to convict criminals. The United States is just beginning to adopt these methods. Their use at first will be slow. But the time will come when even these methods which are described as scientific will become obsolete.

"The police of to-day are concerned with crime prevention rather than crime detection. Just as the old school of medicine has slowly come around to the ideas of the school of preventive medicine, so will the science of criminology change its point of view. The day will come when it will be so difficult for a man to commit crime that there will be very little of it. That will be the day when the science of crime prevention has been mastered."

One of the countries which is leading the way in the study of criminology is France. The Frenchman takes the point of view that the criminal attempts constantly to keep up with the strides which the police make, and so it is necessary for him to keep studying every minute. In France police laboratories and museums and schools are taken seriously. Of all the institutions dealing with crime and its detection the one at Lyons which is directed by the famous Doctor Locard, one of the ablest criminologists in Europe to-day, and one of the youngest, is probably the best known and the one most frequently visited by police officers from all parts of the world.

During the past year the Lyons school, partly due to the wave of poison pen letter writing, dedicated itself to a study of handwriting. Much came out of it. It may be recalled here that it was Doctor Locard who solved the mystery of the famous "Tiger Eye Case" in Tulle. His knowledge of handwriting brought the young woman responsible to justice.

Doctor Locard has taken up the study of handwriting in the following order:

1. Erasion, or scratching.
2. Surcharge.
3. Forgery by tracing.
4. Freehand forgery.
5. Disguised writing.

The first two are largely matters of chemistry. When a document has been tampered with either an eraser or a knife, the fact is revealed easily, either in looking through the page held up to the light or by soaking it in benzine. Benzine spreads in a circular manner in an untouched, unerased document, but when it arrives at a point where the paper fibres are broken and the "size" injured its progress becomes irregular both in speed and in direction. This extremely simple means shows the spots which

have been interfered with. It is then a matter of restoring the original text.

In the case of pencil writing it is almost always possible to find out what was rubbed out by photographing the back of the page in oblique light. The point of a pencil produces a groove which no rubbing can entirely remove.

In the case of ink it is more difficult. There are three systems. Bertillon's system, which he called carburation, consists of making the paper very hot in an oven. This often works, but nearly always completely, and at the same time the document—often of great value—is ruined. In a postal fraud case at Annecy the expert, in using this method, entirely destroyed the only proof of the innocence of the accused.

Another method, more recent, consists in the use of chemical means. This operation, however, demands a knowledge of the chemical composition of the ink used, usually a difficult matter. Analysis of the ink of the context must first be done—a difficult and delicate operation.

The third method is by photography. This is called Fogel's method, and was invented by the Berlin scientist more than fifty years ago.

A woman went to be photographed. While the plates were being developed it was discovered that many obscure blotches and spots covered the face. As the woman had a perfectly beautiful complexion the photographer asked her for another sitting. She did not grant the request, and it was later discovered that she had contracted smallpox, and that the faithful photographic plate had revealed the telltale eruption, while she was as yet unaware that anything was wrong. With Fogel's method a special technique is required. Chromolithic plates are used, and more commonly those sensitized by iodide of silver. At the present day hardly any case of erasion, no matter how thoroughly done, is beyond the powers of the expert to detect and to reconstruct the words eliminated.

The original text may have been altered by clever changes in the original numbers or letters or by new words superimposed after erasion. In the first case microphotography will show the joint between the alteration and the original.

The most difficult case is when it is claimed that a whole line or paragraph has been inserted after the original signature. This is a common fraud in France in cases concerning partnership deeds. In one case microphotography showed clearly that the capital letter of the place of signature had its loop superimposed on the tail of the letter of the line complained of. Therefore the latter had been written first, and the complaint was not justified. But it is extremely difficult to say in many cases which is the first written, as even under microphotography the heaviest line looks the most recent. By photographing the passage, however, by oblique light such letters appear in the form of a cross, and it is easy to see which arm is continuous and thus the most recent. Chemical reactives are also useful in this class of problem.

In the case of forgery by tracing the detective should always win. Sometimes the forger places the paper and the copy on a retoucher's glass plate strongly illuminated fronr underneath. The faults revealed by microphotography consist of "quavers" or "tremblings" and points where the pen is lifted. The study of the former demands a knowledge of the abstruse art of "shakes" in handwriting. The expert must know the perfectly distinct varieties of such and be able to distinguish those due to epilepsy, neurasthenia, paralysis, etc., from those inseparable from this form of forgery. The forgers' "shakes" have a character of irregularity in extent, a development in the up-strokes, a thinning off in the commencements, a frequency of occurrence, and an exaggeration in the joints which are recognizable to the eye of the expert, according to Locard.

There are two chief varieties of forgery by imitation. Sometimes there is a slavish imitation of the model, and sometimes the forger, after having practised imitation of the handwriting, makes a free imitation. The first class is usually approached by a search for the "retouches." Many people have the habit of retouching their own signature, either to make what they have writ-

ten clearer or from mere habit. The forger who is touching up a signature he has faked will naturally always seek in this to get nearer to the original, whereas the innocent retoucher will always make his correcting strokes at places where greater clearness is required. The forger retouches the best-written letters; the others those which are worst.

On the other hand, the freehand imitation has fed retouches. The most general thing in such cases is to resort to the delicate, long and difficult method of composite photography. The composite photograph eliminating accidental traits of the signature in question results in a perfect "signature type" with which the supposed forgery is compared.

In Europe it is quite common to have the authenticity of a will, or some other important legal document, denied. The question of deciding the real identity of the author of a given piece of handwriting happens with great frequency in questions concerning the French police. In such cases handwriting experts, good or bad, are called in, and their conclusions are invariably opposed by one or other of the contesting parties.

It is a scientific fact that there is no real science of handwriting, and that questions of identification are matters of observation with all its weaknesses. The method commonly used—in France, at any rate—within the last twenty years was to compare one by one the form of each letter, and to say: "This document having 'b's' and 'c's' made in such and such a way, and the piece to be compared having the same letters done in a somewhat similar manner, the two writings are by the same hand."

Of recent years this method has been improved, principally by the studies of Alphonse Bertillon and Schneickert. The first invented the method of photographing the texts, cutting out groups of letters from the print so obtained, and making up tables of comparison showing the general look of a letter throughout its individual variations. Schneickert's method consisted of seeking, in the body of the writing to be compared, not only the similarities of form in chosen letters, but in the resemblances and dissemblances of the general character of the writing, different sorts of joining lines, methods of endings, thickness of up-strokes, general angularity or roundness of the letters.

Writing is the trace left by a multitude of small acts. These acts are conditioned by variable and constant factors. Variable—such as the mental state, haste, exterior temperature, the instruments employed. Constant—such as the education and habit which fixes the calligraphic type, the position of the hand, the length of the bones of the hand, the suppleness of the wrist, the force of the muscles of the forearm and palm. The resultant of these factors is a combination of acts not always identical to each other, but sufficiently similar for their author to be identified.

This identity is not difficult in ordinary cases, but it is when the writer has modified his handwriting to avoid being recognized, as in the case of poison-pen letters, or to try to imitate another, as in the case of forgery. In cases such as this it is not enough to make a simple comparison without rules, purely qualitative, and dealing exclusively with form. A quantitative analysis is necessary. Bertillon saw this years ago when he wrote:

"Writing in each individual case presents particularities or tricks that a forger cannot imitate in their whole, while a forger takes into the imitation, in spite of himself, his own tricks and particularities."

The great creator of anthropometry did not himself, however, go further into this matter, which is the key of the new science of handwriting—graphism, as it is usually styled.

Counterfeiters in Express Fraud

THOUSANDS of dollars worth of counterfeit American Express Company travelers' checks have been seized by detectives of the express company in cooperation with local authorities. Three men are now under arrest charged with counterfeiting, it was announced by County Detective Charles O. Davenport, of Asbury Park, N. Y., who was first to discover the operations of the alleged counterfeiters.

Giles M. Ranney, an engraver, is under arrest at Freehold and two other men are being held in Cincinnati in connection with the counterfeiting operations, which extended to Birmingham, New Orleans, Buffalo, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and other cities, according to Detective Davenport. The plates from which the counterfeits were made are said to have been dropped into the Hudson River.

Walter R. Nolan, alias L. M. Sherman, and James Watson, alias James Reed, are the two men under arrest in Cincinnati. They were arrested in New Orleans and $10,500 worth of bogus travelers' checks are alleged to have been found in their possession.

Davenport was informed last month that the bogus checks were being disposed of here, and he traced some to a local printing shop, where, he says, he saw Ranney and another man comparing counterfeits. Davenport reported the matter to Prosecutor Sexton at Long Branch, who notified the Department of Justice.

Federal operatives investigated and found that it was express travelers' checks that were involved and not money, as they had been informed. Express company detectives then investigated, with the result that Ranney was arrested.

Meantime, according to Davenport, a teller in the Pacific Bank, Seventh avenue and Forty-ninth street, New York, noticed a number of counterfeit travelers' checks among the deposits of some of the merchants who are customers of the bank. He notified the express company and the investigation was speeded up. Banks and merchants throughout the country were notified to watch for the counterfeits.

Davenport said the counterfeiters learned that they were being sought and they left New York, two going to Philadelphia, where they disposed of $400 worth of bogus checks. Thence the men went to New Orleans and to Birmingham. In New Orleans they were arrested.

American Express Company officials said to-day they believed this was the first time their travelers' checks had been successfully counterfeited, although attempts had previously been made.

Ranney, who is in jail at Freehold, was arrested with a gang of alleged postage stamp counterfeiters in this section last year. The case did not come to trial and Ranney was freed on his own recognizance. Davenport said Ranney had served prison terms in Atlanta and Galveston. Another member of the postage-stamp counterfeiting gang is now in jail in Washington.

Davenport said one of the men under arrest in Cincinnati has made a full confession. He said that one of the plates was destroyed here and three others dropped into the Hudson.

The New York police do not know how many bogus express checks have been printed and circulated. They hope to make another arrest in the case soon.

This is the first time in thirty-two years that an attempt to cash such checks has been successful, officers of the company said to-day. They explained that about 30,000 express agencies, banks, hotels and merchants were notified when it was found that the fraudulent orders were being circulated.

It is said that the engraving was done by an expert but that the printing is poor.

The Trail of the Notch

by D. C. Retzloff

CHAPTER ONE

"HAVE a seat, Mosley." Joseph McLain, chief of the San Francisco detective force, swung his well-shod right foot down from the knee of his left leg and waved his fat hand toward a straight-backed chair on the other side of his flat-topped desk.

Harry Mosley, tall, pleasant-faced and in the latter twenties, took the chair indicated and passed Joseph McLain a long, slim cigar girdled with gilt.

"What's the news, chief?" Mosley questioned, watching Joseph McLain light a match with a flip of his thumb-nail.

McLain held the match to the end of the cigar, blew a couple of whiffs of smoke before he turned and let his inky black eyes under heavy, almost bushy brows rest on the immaculately clad figure in the chair opposite.

"At last we've got a picture," said McLain deliberately, handing the young man a small photograph.

"You don't say!" Mosley exclaimed. His face flushed as he eagerly looked at the piece of paper. "By Jove, you have!"

"I'll say we have." McLain bent forward, his heavy arms resting on the desk. "Some luck to have planted that camera every night for a week in Rosenthal's and other stores, our first test with it."

"You guessed right when you selected Rosenthal's," Mosley declared, turning the picture first one way and then the other.

"We sure did." McLain ran his pudgy fingers up through his graying hair. "Some time after eleven last night this bird blew the safe and proved that your camera is a real eye of the law, for this is his picture."

"What luck!" Mosley's face resembled a sunrise as he studied the bit of cardboard. "But"—he paused, and his face began to lose a bit of its light—"but say, chief, here's something strange. The camera took the fellow's back; nothing shows except the back of the head and one ear."

"I know it." McLain drew some papers toward him, studied them for an instant, knocked the ashes off his cigar and said: "Yes, the left side of the head and the back."

The young man sighed. "That's too bad. Not a single thing by which to identify the burglar. Really it is a shame—the picture is of no value whatsoever."

McLain's inky eyes swung from Mosley to the high ceiling and back again. "Not so bad as that," he said. "A slight identification was photographed."

Mosley shook his head. He thought

Chief McLain must be mistaken, but he did not say so. He laid the picture on the desk and bent over it. Fog drifted in through the open window; from the street came the noise of the cable cars and the shrill cries of newsboys calling the headlines of the afternoon papers.

Suddenly Mosley straightened and said:

"By Jove, I believe I see what you mean —a small notch in the fellow's ear."

McLain looked from under his bushy brows and rubbed his square chin with his heavy hand. "Your eyes take in detail quickly."

Harry Mosley knew that Joseph McLain was kidding him, so he let his mouth expand into a good-natured grin and replied:

"I'm willing to confess that close observation is not my star accomplishment. Is there any other clue—something like fingerprints, for instance?"

"No such luck." McLain kicked back in his chair. "Fingerprints have gone out of fashion."

"How was the job done, chief? Have you any idea?"

"It was a combination job," McLain began without hesitation. "They cut in on the electric wires from the outside, then used electricity to sever the iron bars on the rear windows. They tried electricity on the safe, but for some reason it would not work, so they used the soup. When they blew the big door off the result was just what you anticipated when you built your camera. The jar opened the shutter, and the light resulting from the explosion furnished the illumination. I want to congratulate you, now I'm really sure that what you've done will be of great service to the police department."

Mosley recalled the long hours he had devoted to building his camera; how he had experimented with half a dozen different shutters before he made one delicate enough to operate with a slight jar. Even then, although he had a large and rapid lens, the camera would not work to his satisfaction. At last he decided to have special films made, the emulsion several times more rapid than those used in ordinary cameras. When the machine was perfected it had taken him several days to convince Chief McLain that the device would photograph a burglar in the act of blowing a safe. Now McLain admitted the success of his instrument, so Mosley could afford to smile as he asked:

"Anything else, chief?"

"Yes"—McLain reached into the open safe behind him—"yes, this." He laid a necklace of gold nuggets and diamonds on top of the papers on the desk. "This was picked up this morning near the entrance to Golden Gate Park. There were fresh automobile tracks where it lay, and Rosenthal has identified it as a piece that was manufactured in his workroom."

"What else does the jeweler say is gone?"

"Another necklace of emeralds and pearls, about twenty thousand dollars' worth of diamonds set and unset. The poor little fellow is all busted up. We've got to get action for him. He's already gone so far as to see Boss Helm, and you know, Mosley, that when the political boss of San Francisco says 'jump,' why we got to do something pronto." McLain placed the picture and the necklace back in the safe.

"Have you any idea who the man is?" Mosley asked.

"I have," McLain announced positively. "And I've assigned Kelly LaMar to look up one William Henderson."

"You don't say. You're speedy, chief."

"Well, we haven't got Henderson yet," answered McLain, adding after a slight pause: "But we've got a picture of him that we took once before, and I've hopes of taking another."

"Good!" Mosley began to feel enthused. His camera would be the medium through which the thief would be identified. "You'll have an easy time, chief. At first I thought I'd ask your permission to mix in the case, but it is apparent that all you have to do is to go out and pick up your man."

"For the fraction of a second a smile curled the corners of McLain's strong, straight mouth.

"Your thoughts are quicker than your eyes, Mosley. We have not heard from

Henderson since we mugged him about three years ago."

"Keeping under cover, is he? What had he done when you photographed him?"

"He was in a shooting scrape of some sort at the 'Golden Bell' on the Barbary coast. Two men were killed, but we could not prove that Henderson did any shooting. He claimed that he was standing at the far end of the room and a stray bullet took a chunk out of his left ear."

"I'd like mighty well to mix in this case, chief." On account of his camera he felt that he was not asking too much.

"You have my O. K.," said McLain. "Go see Kelly LaMar. He's quite enthusiastic about the camera, and undoubtedly he'll let you pal along with him." Again a smile curled the corners of the big man's lips. "Listen, Mosley, just a word of advice; don't outshine Kelly, whatever you do. He's looking for promotion."

For two years young Mosley had covered the leading criminal cases for the *Daily Express*. During that time he had seen the police completely outwitted by murderers and yeggs, and in his brain was born the idea of building an instrument that would photograph a burglar at the time of the commission of his crime. Among several other stores Chief McLain had selected Rosenthal's Diamond Palace as a trial place for the installation of the camera. This store was famous up and down the Pacific coast for its large stock of precious stones. It was conceded by Chief McLain to be the poorest risk for burglar insurance in San Francisco, as Rosenthal would not allow the large safe to stand out where it was visible to the night watchman who patroled the street.

CHAPTER TWO

HARRY MOSLEY found Kelly LaMar sitting at a wide desk in a fair-sized room. His feet were elevated above his head and rested on a filing cabinet. He was a slender man with a clean-shaven face and large dark eyes. His lips, except when occupied with a cigar, had a curious expression of perpetual eagerness.

"Hello, Mosley." LaMar reached out a thin, corded hand. "Been in to see what your camera bagged? Some picture! Tallies with the identification card the chief has on file."

"Yes," said Mosley, "but aside from the notched ear there's nothing to connect it with the picture snapped last night."

"Nothing to connect them? Why, man alive, what more do you want than a notched ear?" LaMar dropped his feet and straightened in his chair.

"I would like to have a few fingerprints and——"

"Sure," LaMar interrupted. "So would I, but you know fingerprints are out of style. We've not had a fingerprint case for three or four months."

"I know," Mosley agreed, "but if you had something in this case more than a notched ear, you could——"

Again LaMar interrupted:

"Say, we've got to take whatever clue comes, and a notched ear is good enough."

"I know," repeated Mosley, "but——" He paused as Kelly LaMar reached up and tapped him on the arm.

"Say, Mosley, let me ask you one question. How many notched ears have you ever seen?"

A worried look settled in Harry Mosley's blue eyes. "None, I'll admit. I'm awfully sorry that we didn't get a better view of the burglar—something more than a notched ear."

"I tell you that notched ear is better than fingerprints, Mosley. Notched ears are like hen's teeth. We'll lay low and pick Henderson up. He's the bird, I'd be willing to bet my last shirt."

"Chief McLain told me that I could keep in touch with the case," said Mosley. "Do you think I could be of any assistance to you?"

"Maybe," replied the detective slowly. "You may pal along. I'm going to Telegraph Hill, Chinatown and the Barbary coast. I nearly always begin operations in those districts."

"And I'm to trail along with you, is that it?" questioned Mosley.

Detective LaMar nodded.

"I've always had a desire to know how your profession worked from the inside; now I'll see," Mosley smiled.

"Wait!" LaMar raised his thin hand. "There's not to be any newspaper publicity about this. You reporter guys spoil a lot of hard work sometimes."

"I give you my word not to spoil anything, LaMar."

"Very well." The detective stood up. "Have you a gun?"

"No." Mosley shivered slightly. "No, I never had one; I don't like the looks of them."

"Can't be a detective without a gun. I'll loan you one." LaMar opened one of the drawers of his desk. "Here, carry this while we are on the trail of the notched ear. You may need one in each hand before you are through."

Harry Mosley took the blue-steel automatic, held it awkwardly, inspected it half-fearfully, and carefully slipped it into his hip pocket.

"I don't like the idea of wearing a gun," he said.

"There were a good many things that I didn't like when I first began this kind of work," LaMar replied. "But while you're traveling with me you must go armed. There are places in San Francisco that even in your work as a reporter you've never dreamed existed. We'll visit those places, and we've simply got to be armed in case of emergency."

Chilling shivers crept up Harry Mosley's spine at the suggestion of LaMar, but he smiled and asked:

"When does the man hunt start?"

"This evening at eight." LaMar consulted his notes. "No use beating the pavements until after dark."

CHAPTER THREE

THE clock in the Ferry tower pointed to eight as the detective and the reporter met at the corner of Market and Kearney streets. As they walked along through the fog they discussed their plans.

LaMar said he was positive that it was not a one-man job; that in all probability there was a woman accomplice. He cited several cases on which he had worked, and in every instance except one he found that a woman had taken a hand.

"Nearly every yegg has his woman," he added, "and I'll wager that Henderson's just the kind that will try to hide behind a skirt."

It was eleven o'clock when they left the restaurants and saloons of Telegraph Hill. Not a word had they gathered regarding the man they were hunting. If William Henderson was known to any among the Spanish, French or Italian population, Kelly LaMar had not been able to discover it.

Chinatown with its queer cafés, its hole-in-the-wall noodle shops, its dark, evil-smelling passageways, was next visited. Among the low-browed, slant-eyed orientals LaMar had many speaking acquaintances. But even the coins which he slipped to one and another of them failed to bring any favorable information.

From Chinatown to the Barbary coast they trailed. In dance halls and dives fetid with the odor of rank tobacco and stale beer they rubbed shoulders with sailors in blue blouses and longshoremen in plaid mackinaws.

Harry Mosley listened and marveled at the discretion with which LaMar questioned the different proprietors. Every reply was in the negative—the man with the notched ear was unknown.

Streaks of dawn were flushing the eastern sky as the two men stood again at the corner of Market and Kearney.

"Go home, Mosley," said LaMar. "Tomorrow is Thanksgiving. Meet me at the Ferry at two; we'll go across the bay to the races. Maybe we can pick our man up over there."

CHAPTER FOUR

LATE Thanksgiving afternoon the detective and the reporter elbowed their way to the upper deck of the ferryboat. A

crowd homeward bound from the racetrack filled the *Berkeley* to its full capacity. The pale sun dropped behind low-lying fog banks in the west and a chill wind ruffled the bay with small whitecaps. The two men located a vacant seat sheltered by the deck house, and almost immediately LaMar was attracted to the couple just in front of him. He leaned forward, his mouth settled into a thin line, a satisfied light flickered in his eager eyes.

William Henderson, the man with the notched ear, was sitting conversing with a pretty girl dressed in gray. A gray, misty veil was drawn in and knotted at the back of the close-fitting gray hat. She had pulled off a pair of gray gloves and was sketching with a gold pencil something on a scrap of paper, at the same time explaining the lines to the young man.

LaMar craned his neck, lifted his chin and whispered to Mosley: "William Henderson."

A strong gust of wind tore the paper from the girl's hand, whirled it aloft, where it poised for a moment before it fell at the detective's feet.

In reaching for the paper Henderson's hat blew off. By the time he recovered it the scrap of paper with its penciled lines was tucked away in LaMar's pocket.

Disappointment was registered on both faces as man and girl sought for the bit of white. They were still looking for it when with a dull bump the boat entered the San Francisco slip.

As the pair paused on the sidewalk after passing through the Ferry building LaMar stepped up to them, tapped Henderson on the shoulder, and called him by name.

Henderson's good-natured smile faded into a look of astonishment as he turned and failed to recognize his accoster.

"Henderson," repeated the detective, "Chief McLain wants to see you at headquarters."

The long, lithe form of the young man stiffened, his face changed color. "What does he want?" he demanded point-blank.

The detective pulled back the lapel of his coat. "Better come quietly. Until I deliver you at his office you are under arrest."

"Arrest!" exclaimed the girl. "Tell him that he's mistaken, Will."

"Orders is orders," said LaMar. "If there's any mistake he can explain it to the chief. I'm doing my duty; we'll be moving."

By the time Henderson was ushered into the presence of Joseph McLain he had recovered complete control of himself. With hat in hand he stood calmly while LaMar spoke in low tones to the chief.

McLain turned the pages of a book, studied it a moment and then asked: "What's your name?"

"William Henderson."

"Born where?"

"Iowa."

"Age?"

"Twenty-six."

"Married?"

"No."

"Occupation?"

"Electrician."

"Employed where?"

"Little River Power Company."

"What were you doing on the evening of the 22d?"

The young man hesitated.

"I'm waiting," McLain announced. "Better make a clean breast of it."

"If it was any of your business I would."

LaMar's eager eyes opened a bit wider, Mosley leaned against the desk and smiled slightly.

"Perhaps this will make you open up." McLain flung the identification card and the two photographs down on the desk.

As Henderson's glance fell on them a red wave swept from the roots of his hair downward and lost itself underneath his tight-fitting collar.

"That chapter is closed, chief," he said quietly. "Closed and forgotten."

"Forgotten," mimicked the officer. "Well, maybe I can freshen your memory. This photograph was taken about three years ago, and this smaller one was snapped the night of the 22d, when a yegg blew the safe at Rosenthal's and lifted a fortune. Your ear is notched; both pictures show the same style ear. You're the man who did the job."

"You are wrong."

"Am I? Then explain where you were on the night of the 22d."

"I simply say you are wrong."

"Put him away, LaMar." McLain waved his hand and turned to Mosley. "We'll run down the skirt and see what we'll see."

CHAPTER FIVE

EARLY Friday morning Harry Mosley came face to face with a slender girl at the door of the detective headquarters. Their glances met; a slow color burned in her cheeks as he lifted his hat.

The girl relieved the tension of the situation by going straight to the heart of things.

"I am Marie Black. I saw you yesterday, when—when William Henderson was arrested. Do you think I can see the chief?"

"I'm going to his office now," said Mosley. "You may come along with me."

Chief McLain drew himself up with an unconscious gesture when he saw Harry Mosley entering his office with the young woman.

"This is Miss Marie Black, Mr. McLain," said the reporter.

"Good-morning, Miss Black; what can I do for you?" McLain's eyes were busy.

"I've come to make inquiries about Mr. Henderson. One of your men arrested him last night."

"Henderson," repeated the chief. "Oh, yes. What would you like to know?"

"Is he still in jail?".

"Yes." There was no warmth in McLain's voice; his inky eyes and bushy brows chilled Mosley, and at that moment the reporter made up his mind to lend his assistance to Marie Black.

The girl swallowed hard, crushed her handkerchief and faltered. "The man—who arrested him—said that you would release him as soon as you discovered your mistake."

"I very seldom make mistakes, young lady, and I assure you I've not made one this time."

Mosley thought that the girl was going to faint. Every drop of blood left her face. She swayed and clutched at her throat, then with what seemed an effort she steadied herself, and with a lift of her well-set head asked: "May I see him?"

McLain touched a button in the wall.

"Briggs, take this young lady to see William Henderson. Give them ten minutes together," he said, addressing an elderly man in police uniform who answered the call.

The instant the door in the corridor slammed Mosley with a serious expression on his face exclaimed:

"Look here, chief. That pretty girl can't have any connection with the crime."

"Why not?"

"Why, man, where's your eyes? She's nothing but an innocent child. Look at her honest face and her perfect manners!"

"Get out!" exploded the chief. "A clever actress and, I'll admit, good-looking, trained to act the lady. Right now I'll assign you to watch Marie Black. I want you to do it; I want you to see how easily you'll get stung. She can't fool me; I know her kind."

"I'll hold on to my opinion until I'm convinced that she's a fake," said Mosley. "I'm neither her friend nor her enemy, but I've a hunch that she'll show you that she had nothing to do with the robbery, and Henderson looks to me like a decent sort of fellow."

McLain was called to the telephone, and before he had finished his conversation Marie Black re-entered the room. She met the gaze of the chief calmly and asked:

"May I see the photograph you showed Mr. Henderson?"

McLain handed her the envelope containing the snap caught by Mosley's camera. As he pulled the picture from its cover the film fluttered to the floor. She picked it up, looked first at it and then at the photograph. She compared the two, placed the film on a blank sheet of paper and studied it intently. After a few minutes she gave them both back to McLain.

"May I ask if this is a special film, Mr. McLain?"

"Yes," he answered.

"And is it made for a certain camera?"

"Yes," again from the chief.

"And only one film is in the camera at a time?" Her voice was steady.

For the third time McLain said: "Yes."

"Thank you. I work in a photographic supply house and have developed miles of films. When Mr. Henderson told me of this picture I thought I might see something in it that had escaped your notice. You have the wrong man."

"Indeed!" There was sarcasm in McLain's tones. "You are wrong, absolutely wrong. William Henderson has a police record. He got his notched ear in a shooting scrape at the 'Golden Bell' some years ago."

"I'll prove to you that for once you are not only unjust, but absolutely wrong," she said, and without waiting for him to reply walked from the office.

McLain struck the desk smartly with his fist.

"A clever 'moll.' Nothing under God's heavens is plainer to me than that."

"She thinks she saw something in the picture," said Mosley.

"You are detailed to watch her," answered McLain. "That scrap of paper found on the ferry convicts her, in my mind. It was the ground floor plan of a house. She had drawn it to help Henderson in some robbery. She's as guilty as he is. Follow her; watch her."

Mosley rubbed his chin. "I'll do it. I don't agree with you in your opinion of either the girl or the man, but I'll drop on her trail to-night when she leaves work and not let her out of my sight until she goes home. I'll see you to-morrow."

CHAPTER SIX

THE first beams of the morning's sun were breaking through a bank of fog overhanging the bay. Garbage wagons groaned with moldy smelling loads, milk carts rattled empty bottles along the pavements as Chief McLain, half awake and wholly peeved, reached for the shrieking telephone standing at the head of his bed. "Well—well?" he grumbled.

"This is Mosley talking," came over the wire. "We want you down at the Emergency Hospital as soon as you can come."

Half an hour later McLain entered the office of the Emergency Hospital. He blinked as he saw Harry Mosley, Kelly LaMar and Marie Black. He squared his thick shoulders and gruffly demanded: "Why this early call? What's the mystery?"

A bright spot of color burned in the detective's face.

"Speak up, LaMar," said Mosley. "You tell the chief why we sent for him. You're on the force."

"Step in here, chief." LaMar motioned toward a door at the left.

"The dead room?" There was surprise in McLain's voice.

They entered a small room with bare walls and long windows. A tall man lay on the marble slab. They walked to the right side of the still figure.

Before a word was said McLain held up his hand.

"I know why you sent for me," he said. "It is Henderson; he was guilty. You see, Miss Black, I was not mistaken. He couldn't stand the pressure and killed himself. In my years of experience I've met many of his kind. They can't fool me."

He stood facing the girl. A door at the end of the room opened and William Henderson walked in. At the noise McLain turned his head; for once his eyes bulged.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" he exclaimed.

"Now you know you did make a mistake, Mr. McLain," said Marie Black. "We got Mr. Henderson out on bail."

"I made the discovery, chief," began Mosley. "You detailed me to help on the case, so last night about nine o'clock I drifted down to the Barbary coast. I found Roundsman Smalley, and was doing his beat with him when a fire alarm was turned in from 'Three-finger George's.' You know the place, an old dwelling on a side street, saloon below and cheap rooms above. We helped empty the dump. Upstairs in one room we found a man on a couch. We

brought him here; the doctor says he was a dope fiend, and his ear is notched. That's the man lying there. His name is Long Lou."

"You're too quick," said McLain as he examined the dead man. "The snapshot shows the left ear notched, and this man's is the right. Henderson's left ear is notched."

"This is the safe robber, Mr. McLain," said Marie Black. "I can prove it. The picture you showed me was printed wrong-side out."

"Why didn't you say so when you discovered it?" demanded the chief.

"Because even though I was satisfied in my mind that you had made a mistake there was a possibility of the film being reversed in the camera. You said it was a special film and made for a certain camera, and I wanted to be sure that I was absolutely right before I told you what I saw," she replied.

"The dead man is 'Long Lou,' chief," said Mosley. "The doctor recognized him as soon as we brought him here. He was known to several on the Coast as an opium smuggler.

"'Long Lou,' the man who gave me my notch," said Henderson. "One of his bullets went wild in the 'Golden Bell' three years ago. I was there trying to locate some electrical trouble. They had a shooting scrape and I caught one of the bullets."

Mosley held out a sparkling object; it caught and reflected the light filtering in through the tall windows. "The dog collar necklace of emeralds and pearls stolen from Rosenthal's and found on the body of 'Long Lou'."

McLain's face reddened.

"You're free after a few formalities." He turned to Henderson. "I believe Miss Black is right about the mistake in printing the film. Considering the circumstances and your notched ear, you can't blame me. Will you shake hands?"

Henderson gripped the chief's big hand, but his eyes were on Marie Black.

"There are two questions that I would like to ask?" McLain spoke in his usual brusque manner. "Where were you on the evening of the 22d and what was the meaning of that rough drawing with a cross in a room? You lost it on the ferryboat Thanksgiving Day. Kelly LaMar picked it up."

Before Henderson had a chance to reply Marie Black turned to Kelly LaMar and exclaimed: "So you found it! I'll tell what it is, chief. It's a plan——" She paused and blushed.

"Yes, a plan," prompted the chief.

"The plan of a bungalow. The cross indicated a fireplace in the living-room. Will and I almost quarreled about the fireplace." Still blushing, she continued: "The night of the 22d Will and I were out at the Cliff House. That is when he proposed to me."

THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS IN ALCOHOL

IN a picturesque mountain valley situated in the Puy de Dome department close beside the village cemetery at Viverols, France, stands a little private chapel. It is the property of a distinguished archeologist who built it in 1885 at the death of his father.

Hermetically sealed to the public, all inquisitive eyes being carefully kept away, this chapel contains an extraordinary coffin in which the archeologist, who himself is to-day an old man of eighty, has for thirty-eight years kept his father's body preserved in spirits like an anatomical specimen. The devoted son could not bear the idea of never again seeing his venerated parent in the flesh. So having obtained permission of civil and religious authorities, he built a zinc coffin with a glass top. In this, immersed in alcohol, he laid his father's body, fully dressed in everyday clothes. Every morning the old man visits this strange tomb and gazes upon his father's face, which, on the authority of one who knew him intimately, is in a state of perfect preservation.

Chemistry Exposes Crime

A CHEMIST of recent years has become the best known detective in France, says the New York *World*. Edmund Bayle is a small, dark, quiet man; he works in a modern equipped laboratory in the Palais de Justice; he is feared by criminals of all classes, and his ultimate fame promises to surpass that of Alphonse Bertillon, the French fingerprint expert, who died in 1914.

Dr. Bayle is chief of the technical bureau of the Paris Police Department. Here all the criminal information of the republic is concentrated, classified and studied. From this bureau the expert chemist and physicist gives directions in the field of criminal detection. So successful has he been that the ignorant criminal classes have come to regard him as a worker of black magic. The unique methods have been studied by the Police Department of New York.

Dr. Bayle rarely gives much attention to the personality of criminals or their particular psychology. He works rather with material things. His workshop is equipped with all the paraphernalia of a big industrial laboratory. In the records of his bureau are registered no less than 8,000,000 names of persons involved in crimes.

"The detection of crime to-day is something very different from the popular conception," said Dr. Bayle. "The Sherlock Holmes and Arsene Lupin stories of great criminals and their feats are no doubt most entertaining, but that is all I can say for them. From my point of view there is no crime that cannot be detected, that does not leave its traces behind, at least theoretically.

"My methods astound the ignorant criminals, and they have come to fear me when I enter the courts. The so-called intelligent professional criminals seem to have begun to try to thwart me, in a small way. Nowadays they endeavor, by wearing gloves, not to leave fingerprints behind, but we have reached the point where their fingerprints through gloves can be detected.

"Crime is really not very mysterious. The curious point to me is that the crimes which interest me most do not interest the public.

"There has been very great progress made in the detection of crime during the past six or eight years, particularly through the application of chemistry and photography to detection.

"I would like to point out that part of our endeavor has been to help to protect innocence and prevent the miscarriage of justice. Science does not seek to convict. It looks for the truth, no more and no less.

"During the war a spy case, that of a certain Vigo, alias Almereyda, attracted much public attention. The man was found dead in his cell, and there were those who claimed he had been assassinated there. The only evidence was two spots on his shoe laces. By comparative analysis of these, one I found to be mud and the other paint off his bed, and I was able to concluded he had hanged himself and thus clear the jailers of guilt.

"Another case: During the war a young captain wrote his mother the night before a battle in which he was killed. A postscript to the letter revoked a former will in favor of his wife. By analysis of the ink and the handwriting in this postscript, it was shown the mother had forged his signature. She confessed it, though her confession added nothing to the value of the proof.

"We are beginning to eliminate eye-witness proof in crime. We prefer our own, as eye-witnesses distort the facts without sometimes wishing to. Science cannot lie."

The Web of Evidence

By D. L. RADWAY

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

THE PIPER CALLS

STOPPING abruptly as he caught sight of the policeman on the corner ahead, Simmonds sucked in his breath. Fear smote him and his heart hammered at his ribs.

In the next instant he realized what he had done and almost laughed aloud. Why should Roger Simmonds, well-known young man-about-town, feel fear of a policeman who probably did not know him either by sight or name, when a few hours before he would have faced the entire police force with no emotion whatever?

Simmonds knew the answer, of course. But he forced himself to be calm, and stepped forward briskly, even going as far as to hum the air of a popular song under his breath. As he passed the policeman he looked at him frankly, and the policeman smiled. So much for that!

It was almost eight o'clock in the evening. Simmonds was in a district where wealthy men had their homes, where the big houses sat far back from the street, and the spacious lawns were landscaped with trees and shrubs.

Simmonds was due at the residence of William Marley at eight. That was the hour which Marley's secretary had telephoned, and when Marley said eight o'clock he did not mean fifteen minutes after. When he reached there and was admitted to the familiar library, then would come the crucial moment .

"Maybe he doesn't know," Simmonds said to himself. "Maybe it is something else."

But he was feeling genuine fear for the first time in his life. He was fashionably dressed, had money in his pocket and a position in society. Yet the bare thought that he had been found out had been enough to make him forget himself.

"I'm acting like a low crook, a thug!" Simmonds told himself. "I'm Roger Simmonds, and that makes a difference. Maybe he hasn't found out; maybe it is something else—something confidential he wishes me to undertake."

He came to the corner nearest the Marley residence, and unconsciously he slackened his pace.

He could not rightly explain to himself why he had walked rather than take a taxi from the club where he had lived. It was not a particularly fine night for walking, and there was not even a moon. Once more he licked at his dry lips, and once more he realized that he was acting like a man afraid.

"Never do in the world!" he muttered to himself. "I've got to carry this thing through in the proper spirit. Suppose he has found out? He'll only give me a lecture and make me pay the money back. It isn't as though I were some unknown penniless clerk. I am Roger Simmonds!"

As he walked up the street and turned in at the gate before the Marley residence he fought to get control of himself, and he hummed the song again and tried to walk in his usual manner, that of a man who enjoyed life and did not have a care in the world.

He hurried up to the steps, went up on the veranda, and touched the bell button. Evans, Marley's old butler, answered the ring. Simmonds glanced at him shrewdly, but Evans showed nothing in his manner to

lead a man to believe that anything was wrong.

"Mr. Marley expects you, sir," Evans said.

"I trust Mr. Marley is in his usual good health, Evans?"

Evans lifted his eyebrows slightly and made reply. He was the perfect servant, but Mr. Roger Simmonds was almost like one of the family, and that made quite a difference.

"I am afraid that he is in a fearful temper, sir," Evans said in a very soft voice. "He had quite an argument with Miss Dora, sir, and sent her out to the country place."

"'Um!" Simmonds felt his anxiety was growing.

"You are to go right to the library, sir," the butler continued.

Simmonds walked down the long hall toward the door of the library. He braced himself for trouble. Mr. Marley's temper, which was a well-known quantity to his associates, might have been directed solely at his fair daughter, Dora, because of some infraction of household rules such as the magnate always was making. Possibly Simmonds was not concerned in it at all. He certainly hoped not!

Yet he hesitated before the library door, and he realized once more that he was afraid. He tried to tell himself that he was man enough to face the situation, even if the worst came to pass. He forced the usual smile to his face and knocked.

"Come in!" Marley's voice was not reassuring.

Simmonds recognized that Marley still was in his fit of temper. Yet he opened the door instantly and stepped into the library, carefully closing the door after him. Evans was an old and perfect servant, but even old and perfect servants can be curious at times.

"You sent for me, sir," Simmonds said. "The appointment was for eight, I believe."

"Yes, and you are on time!" Marley returned grudgingly. "Whatever else I may say of you, I'll always admit you are a stickler for punctuality. Sit down!"

Marley indicated a chair at the end of the library table, and Simmonds crossed the room slowly and sat down. He glanced furtively at Marley as he moved across the room. There could be no denial of the fact that William Marley was in an awful rage. But Simmonds hoped that he was not the cause of it.

"Punctual!" Marley grunted. "Roger, your father was an associate of mine, and I loved him. Because of a foolish investment he died poor. Then I decided to take you into my office, give you a chance to do what your poor father had failed to do—make a fortune."

"Yes, sir," Simmonds said.

"I told you several things that day when you entered my office—things that I demanded. One of them was punctuality. You have remembered that—and have forgotten all the others!"

"Sir?" Simmonds exclaimed in simulated surprise.

"You are a thief!" Marley said. He did not thunder the sentence, rather he spoke it in a low tone, as though it was something that he could not understand.

"Sir!" Roger Simmonds repeated.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" Marley continued. "Don't try that indignation stuff on me! I was judging men before you were born. You've been found out!"

Simmonds hung his head and clasped and unclasped his hands nervously, ashamed to look at his employer and his father's friend.

"What in the name of Heaven is the matter with the present generation?" asked Marley thunderingly. "Have all of you gone insane? You, my old friend's boy, betray the trust I put in you. My daughter defies me. And Carleton Pendum——"

He ceased speaking, as if his anger choked him. He got up and took a turn around the room and sat down again.

"Well, Roger, what have you to say for yourself?" he demanded. "There can be no question. You have been under suspicion for some time. Your books have been examined. You have been stealing systematically for more than a year. You did it cleverly, but you have been found out. A thief always is found out sooner or later. He cannot escape forever. The law of retribution doesn't work that way."

The young man made no reply. He

sighed deeply once, and then he looked across the library toward the French windows that opened to the veranda. One of them was open a few inches, and the soft breeze was fluttering the curtains. Simmonds wondered that he could notice such a trivial thing at such a time.

"You have stolen more than nine thousand dollars!" Marley said, and his voice grew even sterner. "What have you to say for yourself?"

"I—I am sorry, sir."

"Sorry! The criminal is always sorry when he is found out, when he faces punishment for his crime. And it is not alone the money, Roger. There remains the fact that you have betrayed my trust in you. Where would you be to-day but for me? Working in some firm's shipping-room possibly. But for your dead father's sake I gave you every chance. I paid you more than you were worth. I prepared to give you a chance a little later to stand on your own feet. I even looked with delight upon the growing friendship between you and my daughter; I even hoped that you would marry Dora and be my son.

"And you have thrown all this aside by being a thief. Why did you, Roger?"

"A—man can't live on air—not the way I live."

"I grant you that it was necessary and right for you to live like a gentleman. You had the right to have decent quarters, to dress properly, to have your clubs, to take your place at social affairs, despite the fact that your father had lost all his money."

"And I couldn't do it, sir, on my salary," Simmonds said. "I began taking small amounts, and they grew larger. I—I am sorry, sir. I'll try to do better—to make amends in some way."

"I know of nothing you can do that will wipe from my mind the knowledge that you are a thief," Marley said. "And you have added to your infamy now by being a liar as well!"

"Sir!" Simmonds exclaimed.

"Had you stolen to maintain the position of a gentleman, I might be inclined to try to save you," Marley declared. "But you did nothing of the sort. I have ascertained that you could have maintained your position properly on your salary. It would have paid all legitimate bills and left a few dollars over. I say legitimate bills."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean that you spent money recklessly—stolen money. You are a gambler. You have posed, not as a gentleman, but as a cheap sport! You have tried to make men believe that you have a fortune. You wasted money on unworthy companions. You stole for vicious reasons."

"Are you sure of that, sir?" Simmonds asked. "It would not surprise me to learn that an enemy of mine has been getting misinformation around to you. I wouldn't put it past Carleton Pendum, for instance. He thinks, with me out the way, that he would have a chance with Dora——"

"That's enough!" Marley replied. "I am receiving revelations this evening regarding your character. Now you would attempt to blacken Pendum, whose only fault is that he looks higher than he should. At least he is honest. I have not been listening to stories about you or any other man. My time is entirely too valuable for that. What I have told you are facts that have been given to me by two different detective agencies."

"Those fellows are the greatest liars on earth!" Simmonds said. "They gave you those reports because they supposed that was the sort you wanted."

"Pardon me, but they knew distinctly I would be gratified to find myself wrong," Marley declared. "I almost begged them to show me that there was some mistake, that you were the right sort of man. And the investigation has been going on for more than two months. You have been watched during that time. I discovered two months ago that you were a thief. I made sure of my facts before I called you before me."

"Perhaps I can explain——"

"You cannot explain the money you have wasted over the gambling table."

"I was mad, sir; I gambled in an effort to win back what I had taken."

"What you had stolen, you mean. Do not come to me with that old story and explanation. Did you expect to get the money to pay me back by giving a dinner for cheap

sports? Don't lie to me again, Roger. Try to be a man in part, at least."

"I—I do not know what made me do it," Simmonds said. "After I started it was easy to keep on stealing. But I'll straighten up. I'll work hard and pay you back as soon as possible."

"I hope you do straighten up, Roger, for your dead father's sake. This has been a terrible blow to me. I did not want Dora to know, and so I sent her out to the country place for a few days. I did not want her to share your disgrace. I do not know how far things have gone between you——"

"There is no understanding, sir. I was waiting until my financial condition was better."

"I am glad of that. It is the first thing that has pleased me to-day. She will not be heartbroken then."

"Is it necessary for her to know at all, sir—for anybody to know? I'll straighten up, pay you back——"

"Do you think things can be as they have been?" Marley interrupted. "Certainly not! Do you think I'd overlook this, let you marry my daughter—a thief marry a Marley?"

"But——"

"Can't you understand that you must be punished for this? I do not intend to compound a felony."

"You—you mean that you are going to prosecute me?" Simmonds asked.

"That is for the district attorney to do. I merely make the complaint."

"Don't do that, sir! Give me a chance!"

"No! You're vicious—bad, and you must be punished. Theft is never pardonable, to my way of thinking, and certainly theft for an unworthy purpose is not."

"You'd send me to prison?" Simmonds demanded.

"You have sent yourself there if you go. I have had nothing to do with it. I gave you every chance in the world, and you threw everything aside for a riot of what you call fun. You have danced; the piper remains to be paid!"

Simmonds began to beg. Marley turned from him in disgust.

"Don't be a coward, too," Marley said. "Take your medicine like a man. Pay the bill! Now get out! I'll give you twenty-four hours to put your affairs in order. But do not try to leave the city. You are to be watched, commencing with to-morrow morning. If you ran away to-night I'll have them catch you if it takes years, and I'll punish you the more because of your cowardice! Twenty-four hours to get ready, Simmonds! The bail will be heavy, and you'll never be able to raise it. Your freedom will end with your arrest. So take one day to part with your friends, have one last good time, if that is your idea. Get out!"

"If you will listen——"

"No!"

Roger Simmonds knew that further argument would be futile. He knew Marley well, and he realized that there would be no change of heart. He was doomed! As Marley had said, he had danced, and the piper remained to be paid.

He got up, straightened his shoulders, sighed, and looked once more at his employer. Marley was not even looking at him now; he was staring across the room at space.

"At least I'll show you that I can take my medicine like a man," Simmonds said. "If you wish to send to prison your old friend's son——"

"Ah!" Marley exclaimed. "So you have to make that last whine, do you? You cannot stand on your own feet. You play on my friendship for your dead father!"

"Pardon me, sir, but I play on nothing," Simmonds said. "I can take my medicine—and I can remember you when I came out."

"Threats now, eh?"

"Call it what you like," said Simmonds. "I can go down laughing, at least!"

In a spirit of bravado Simmonds stalked across the room and opened the hall door. He turned and smiled peculiarly at the older man, who still sat beside the table. He bowed ironically, and the white left his face and the red flooded it.

"Good-evening, Mr. Marley!" he said. "I hope that you get a good night's rest!"

That moment of bravado almost sent an innocent man to the electric chair.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DIABOLICAL PLAN

WITH that smile still upon his face, as though it had been frozen there, Simmonds stepped briskly along the hall and came face to face with old Evans. The butler glanced at him questioningly.

"He's all right," Simmonds said. "Just a bit huffy at something that has happened."

"I hate to see him excited, sir," said the butler. "His heart isn't any too good, I am afraid, sir."

"Bosh! I don't believe that he has a heart!" Simmonds replied with a nervous laugh. He did not know why he acted in this manner, unless it was to make everything appear ordinary—to prevent an inkling that there was trouble.

Simmonds went on toward the front to get his hat and coat, and the old butler kept at his heels. In a little reception-room near the front door another man was waiting. Simmonds saw with surprise that he was Carleton Pendum.

Pendum was a young man of promise who had come up from nothing and was rapidly making a name for himself in the financial district and in Marley's employ. Simmonds always had hated him because he recognized Pendum's superiority as a man of business, realized his cleverness and ability. He had presumed to make an attempt to patronize Pendum, to look down upon him because of his humble birth. Pendum had about as much money as Simmonds, but he had not had a distinguished father, did not have the entree to exclusive clubs, and was a mere beginner in the social game.

And then Carleton Pendum had met Dora Marley and fallen in love with her. Nor was he to be easily thrust aside. Even Dora resented Simmonds's slurring remarks about Pendum. She seemed to think that he was honest, sincere, hard-working, and possessed of those qualities for which men of fashion seldom take the trouble to look.

Accordingly Pendum and Simmonds were always at swords' points, though Simmonds tried to tell himself that it was ridiculous to think of Pendum as a suitor for Dora Marley's hand. As they met face to face in Marley's home each wondered what had brought the other there. There was quick suspicion between them.

Pendum was in the act of lighting a cigarette. He put his gold cigarette case down upon the table at his elbow as Simmonds stopped to get his hat and coat, crumpled the cigarette in his fingers, and bowed courteously but frigidly.

"Evening!" Simmonds remarked with bad grace.

Old Evans feared a scene, and he detested scenes. "Mr. Marley will see you now, Mr. Pendum," he said. "Just step into the library, please."

Pendum glared at Simmonds and brushed past him to go down the hall. He had forgotten the cigarette case. Simmonds sneered at his back and allowed old Evans to help him on with his coat. Then Evans turned to get the hat.

Simmonds found the cigarette case at the tips of his fingers. He picked it up quickly and slipped it into his overcoat pocket. Then Evans let him out.

Why he had taken that cigarette case Simmonds could not tell himself. It was as if his mind and muscles were being guided by somebody other than himself. His brain was in a turmoil. He was making an attempt to appear natural, and all the time he was thinking that he had but twenty-four hours, that at the end of that time he would be behind bars. Marley had spoken truly—he would be unable to give bail. He would have to remain in jail until his trial, then go to prison to serve his term.

He shivered as he walked down the steps and started toward the distant street. Prison seemed near to him then. He knew nothing of prisons, but he had a horror of them. It was the fear of incarceration that bothered him more than the disgrace. How did a man in prison bear up under the dull routine. Did he cease to be a man and turn into a mere human machine?

His thoughts changed. What was Pendum doing at the Marley house? Had his visit been at Marley's command? Did it have something to do with Simmonds's affairs.

Simmonds remembered the open window on the veranda. He circled across the dark lawn and made for it. A thousand intangible ideas seemed to be galloping through his brain. He was not Simmonds now; he was a man over whom a prison sentence was hanging.

At the end of the veranda he was glad to find that it was dark. He drew on his gloves and then crept over the railing carefully, so as to make no noise. Along the wall of the house he slipped until he came to the open French window.

There, he found, he could remain in the darkness and yet see into the room. He could hear well, too. Carleton Pendum was just seating himself in the chair at the end of the table, the one in which Simmonds had been sitting when he had heard his doom.

It was evident from Pendum's actions that he had been summoned to the house, but he did not seem at all nervous about it. Marley often called his clerks there to give them confidential orders or to ask them to carry out confidential missions.

"I was on time, Mr. Marley, but I was kept waiting," Pendum said. "You had another visitor."

"That's all right!" Marley replied. He still was angry and unable to conceal his anger, or else he did not care to do so just at this time.

Pendum was waiting for his employer to speak. He picked up a heavy, sharp paper knife from the table and toyed with it while he waited. Marley suddenly bent forward, and though he spoke in a moderate tone, Simmonds, out on the veranda, could hear every word that was said.

"Pendum, possibly you may not like what I am going to say to you," the financier began, "but you've got to hear it, whether you like it or not. You're a good man in the office. I've been watching you for some time. You work hard, you have a natural ability, and there is no reason, so far as I know, why you should not succeed."

"Thank you, sir," Pendum said.

"I'm having quite a time to-day. I'm straightening out a few little affairs that I find need straightening. I'm making a clean sweep. I've dealt with a few persons already, and you are the next and the last!"

"I hope that I have done nothing to merit rebuke, sir," Pendum said, a note of alarm in his voice.

"Not a thing in the office," Marley said. "I am glad, Pendum, to pick up a worthy young man of no family or position, let him enter my employ, and prove that I am a good judge of men, and that a man can succeed by his own merits alone. If he makes good I'm very much pleased. But whereas I am willing to take a man in that manner into my office, I might not be willing to take him into my family."

"Sir!" Pendum visibly paled.

Marley bent across the table again. "I don't mix business and family affairs," he said. "I'll be glad to have you continue with the firm, and I hope you'll win a managership some day, with all that implies, but I want you to discontinue your attempts to interest my daughter!"

Pendum's face went livid, and he seemed about to choke. He gripped the sharp paper-knife until his fingers bled.

"Pardon me, sir," Pendum said, restraining himself with difficulty, "but I am sincerely interested in your daughter. I do not mind confessing to her father that I love her deeply, that I'd be the happiest man in the world if I could win her for my wife. Surely, sir, you did not think that I was trying to arouse your daughter's interest merely to use her for getting into society?"

"No, sir!" Marley fairly thundered. "I give you credit for your sincerity, young man. I realize that you love her and want to marry her. That is why I have sent for you to come here to-night. I sent her away this afternoon, and things are going to be settled before she returns. Understand, Pendum, now and forever—you are to stop seeing my daughter!"

"You mean——"

"I mean that she is not to marry a nobody!"

"You are insulting!" Pendum sprang up.

"Possibly. I'm talking straight and hard, as I always do. I want you to understand this thing."

"You mean that I am not worthy of her? My folks were poor, but they were honest."

"Never mind that talk!" Marley said. "No argument, now! I have decided, and I'm boss in this! Go ahead at the office if you wish, but stay away from Dora! As an employee you're all right, but not as a son-in-law. Matter of fact, you'd never win her. But I don't intend to let you try. I don't want it said all over town that I'm letting a clerk try to marry my girl and get his fingers into the business!"

Simmonds, on the veranda, started at Marley's words and the tone he used. Marley was more insulting than usual. Simmonds supposed it was because of the series of events that had troubled him during the day, his own affairs among them.

Carleton Pendum had sprung to his feet, unconscious of the sharp knife that was still cutting into his fingers. In a towering rage he tossed the knife to the table and shook his fist in Marley's face.

"Take your job!" he said. "I wouldn't work for you another day for half a million dollars! You're not human! You're an insulting brute! I'm more worthy to be your daughter's husband than you are to be her father."

"Pendum!"

"I've had my say, and I'll take no more abuse from you. I don't care if you are William Marley!"

Pendum's outburst subsided, and a moment of quiet ensued. The two men glared at each other. Then Pendum hurried out into the hall, slammed the door after him, and almost collided with old Evans.

"My hat and coat! I want to get away from this accursed house!"

Like a maniac he grasped the hat and coat which Evans offered, jerked open the front door, and hurried toward the street, where his taxi was waiting.

On the veranda in the darkness Simmonds grinned evilly. He had rather enjoyed the scene he had witnessed. Somebody besides himself was getting a tirade from Marley. His rival was a rival no longer.

Then Simmonds remembered that it would avail him nothing. Twenty-four hours he had, and then he would be in prison and in disgrace. The fat financier who sat in the chair a short distance from him would see to that.

Simmonds guessed that the shortage was known only to Marley. The books which he had doctored had been those that dealt with some of Marley's private investments —not those of the firm. If Marley failed to act, nobody but Marley could prove the shortage. Detectives might say that they had been watching Simmonds at Marley's orders, but that in itself would be nothing. There was scarcely a clerk in the office who was not watched at one time or another.

But there was no hope. Marley had said that he would make the complaint, and undoubtedly the complaint would be made. Inside twenty-four hours Simmonds, who liked and abused freedom, would be a jailbird. He had expected to marry Dora Marley and inherit through her the wealth Marley would leave. He had anticipated a life of abundance with money to gratify every whim. Now he was doomed to a life of ruin. If only Marley would die to-night!

His heart almost stood still at the mere thought of it. All the evil impulses of his nature surged to the foreground in his hour of peril. If Marley should die he would not go to prison, and possibly he could marry Dora by playing on her sympathies.

Through the window he could see that Marley was sitting with his back to him, his head bent on his breast. The two scenes had almost exhausted him.

Then a diabolical plan surged into Simmonds's brain. He told himself that some evil power must be guiding and guarding him. In his pocket he had Carleton Pendum's cigarette case. On the table was the heavy, sharp paper-knife, undoubtedly with Pendum's fingerprints all over it. Pendum had rushed from the room after hurling maledictions at old William Marley!

Simmonds was like a beast now. His eyes were burning, his face felt hot, his mouth was dry. He made sure that his gloves were on, and he felt in the pocket of his light overcoat to make sure that the cigarette case was there.

Like a shadow he slipped still nearer to the window, reached out, and opened it wider. Marley made not the slightest move. Like a cat he crept through the window onto the thick rug. If Marley turned Simmonds could say that he had returned to beg mercy.

But Marley did not turn. Simmonds reached the table and grasped the knife by the handle, careful not to soil his gloves with the stain that had come from Pendum's fingers.

Another swift step he took. His left arm went around Marley's neck, and his right hand drove the knife into Marley's heart.

Panic seized him as the knife went home. He sprang backward and reached the window. He tossed Pendum's cigarette case to the floor. Outside he darted and there crouched in the darkness for a moment.

Marley had slumped forward in the chair, and he had ceased breathing. The deed was done! Marley could not have Simmonds arrested now. And if the detectives who had been watching him made a move, Simmonds could say that it was the usual espionage.

He hurried to the end of the veranda and dropped to the ground. He started across the lawn, keeping to the shadows until he reached the side street. Here the darkness of the giant trees cut off the light from the arc lamps.

As the first drops of rain hit his face Simmonds almost laughed aloud. Even the elements were working for him. If he had left footprints at the end of the veranda or on the soft places in the lawn, the storm would obliterate them.

(*To be continued in next week's issue*)

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Last of the Gangsters

CAPTAIN JOHN O'BRIEN

THE present generation has a very vague conception of old-time gang rule in New York. There was a period when this city was in the grip of a reign of terror, not a spasmodic crime wave such as we now experience, but a deadly continuity of crime extending through a number of years at a stretch. The instigators of these crimes were bands of hoodlums who once infested the city under the leadership of expert crooks who gave the police no end of trouble. After years of continuous fighting the police department has wiped the biggest and most notorious of these gangs out of existence. But it has been a hard, stubborn fight, replete with assaults and murders. To-day there are none of the important gangs left, although there have been sporadic attempts to organize societies of crooks in the Black Belt and the Gas House Districts. The haunts of the old gangs have been destroyed before the march of progress. The Bowery is reformed, the Five Point slums and Mulberry Bend rookeries and groggeries have been torn down for the erection of skyscrapers, while prohibition has put most of the saloons out of business wherein the gangsters used to meet.

Even the old Tombs building has been replaced by a modern structure. The old gray pile of Egyptian architecture was once a synonym of all that was frightful to the old-time gangsters.

As it looked out upon the old haunts of the gang it seemed to wear a grimly humorous expression. For the Tombs had an expression. Seen by night when the gusty lamps of Centre street are winking in the winter wind that sweeps forever up from the City Hall Square it looked like a huge gray monster lying on its belly like a snake, showing its teeth like a griffin. Its teeth are those low, thick, tusk-like pillars. Its eyes were those narrow windows.

And as it crouched there with the latter half of its monstrous shape hidden in the shadows, that grimly humorous expression seemed to be assumed when the narrow windows were lighted up at dusk. Then the eyes seemed to blink. The tusk-like pillars seemed in the half light to be set in a ghastly grin. It would not occasion surprise if the jaws beneath the blinking eyes should open and the monster's black throat emit with a chuckle the syllables which have so often mocked its ears.

"Why—oh! Why—oh!"

For the Tombs has swallowed the Whyos, whose call—musical, alert, the light infantry bugle-call of crime—mocked its dread echoes for ten long years and more, and only from within its cavernous viscera shall sound of them be further heard of men. When into its jaws fell the Harringtons, accused by Italian witnesses of a crime in the streets of New York—the assassination of Thomas Hunt—which from all its features—revenge in motive, luring and lying in wait in execution—might seem more aptly one for New Yorkers to have accused Italians of in the streets of Palermo, the last of the Whyos had "tackled" his last "lush," carried his last "gun."

Why should not the monster's black throat emit from between its set tusks the taunting echo of its taunted echoes:

"Why—oh!"

For it has swallowed all those who have not swallowed themselves or each other, and the list of the leaders who met in a Chatham street saloon and thence spread that cry through the labyrinthine mazes of that dark triangle between Centre and Chatham

streets, Canal street and the City Hall, is this, with the process of deglutition:

"Hoggy" Walsh, burglar, ten years; Jack Shea, thief, died insane in prison; Felix Lavelle, woman murderer, life; James Fitzgerald, thief, in prison; Peter Corcoran, thief, in prison; Daniel Driscoll, woman murderer, hanged; Owen Bruen, thief, nine years and five months for assault; Dennis Harrington, waiting trial for murder; William Hallissy, waiting trial for murder; Thomas Hallissy, waiting trial for murder.

And these have swallowed themselves or been swallowed of each other:

Daniel Lyons, killed by citizen in self-defense; "Sass" Suggero, killed by citizen in self-defense; Thomas Hunt, murdered by Whyos.

A fine vintage of 1878 from one Chatham street saloon. What may be the vintage of all the years from all the Chatham street saloons?

There is a certain dignity in Whyo crime that entitles it to research. No other gang had that musical call. No other gang had so Turpinesquely daring a leader as Driscoll, as elusive a one as Bruen, who respectively succeeded Walsh and Fitzgerald, the founders of the dynasty. No other gang had the high lineage of the Five Points behind it. No other gang flourished in a precinct which could show 4,500 arrests in a single year in a single block—that on Mulberry street between Park and Bayard, known as "The Bend." No other gang ruled a street (Pell) with a record of ninety years in sentences for its denizens out of a single week's arrests, and no other gang could show such a high percentage of violent deaths, of assaults on policemen, of wanton crime for the sake of crime.

Research will take us back to the time when the site of the Tombs was a pond, supposed to be bottomless. A pure cold spring-fed lake, originally a skating ground in winter during colonial times, big enough for boating in summer, big enough for John Fitch to give Chancellor Livingston and Robert Fulton, in 1794, a trip in the first screw-propelled steamboat ever built. But all about it was marsh ground, and as the city grew it became a dumping-ground. So home-makers edged away from it over toward the Bowery, and as there was no system of laying out streets before this century was seven years old, huddled their houses together on the triangle and made streets between them as they listed on old cow paths and farm lanes. Thus grew that curious criss-cross tangle of thoroughfares which reached a chaotic culmination when Anthony, Orange and Cross street met at the Five Points, where Worth, Baxter and Park streets meet to-day at "Paradise Park."

As the tide of population, swelled ever by teeming currents from overseas, swept higher up the island of Manhattan, it seemed as if all its flotsam of vice and crime drifted inexorably into these crooked bayous between the two broad channels of Centre street and the Bowery, and there lay in the stagnant eddies to float and fester. Seventy years ago, according to the recollection of an old East Sider, it was all that a man's life was worth to go into the Five Points. The grading of the streets had been as haphazard as their opening. So cellar tenements abounded. The population burrowed underground, stole or starved, fought or fled the feeble police force of the day, as occasion warranted, but drank always. The Five Points had no Hogarth, but change the fashions of tatterdemalliondom by the hundred years which elapsed between his limning of Gin Lane and the heyday of the Five Points and the strong satire on the coarse and brutal eighteenth century will fit the refined and progressive nineteenth. The Old Bowery, on the south side of the Points, was in brief the wellspring of its life.

Sixty years ago society awoke to the Points. The inarticulate clamor of the underground monster began to be heard and understood. Society began to "take measures." The pioneer church, the Methodist, took the first. It set itself to fill up the wellspring of the life of the Points—the brewery. To-day its mission stands upon the brewery's site. Then the city legislature took a hand. To abolish the cellar tenements the grades of Anthony, Orange and Cross streets were changed. It was re-

solved that the new streets should have new names. To connect residence with the old ones was to bar the door of every honest house in the land against you. So the Council christened Anthony Worth and Orange Baxter and Cross Park, and thereby invited decent people to come in and reclaim the Points. Society did not stop there. To-day, in addition to the mission, there is a chapel, a House of Industry on the Points.

The ulcer has been cut out of the body politic. The taint which caused the new ulcer remained in its veins. When the fester came again society, its interests too much widened to care much about the matter any way, did not connect the "Whyo gang" with the old, "abolished" Five Points.

Not by direct heredity were the "gang" the progeny of the Points and the Tombs. It is a singular fact that the Whyos who attained the worst eminence were the progeny of decent, industrious Sixth ward families —so decent, so industrious, that the police, who have seen enough of the grief of honest old fathers and mothers at the doors of cells or the steps of vans, whence the only egress for their wayward sons would be to Sing Sing or the gallows yard—will not reveal in detail the stock from which the Whyos sprang. So it is doubtless the fact that not a few of the very families who were invited by the change in the names of streets to reclaim the Five Points region suffered for the reclamation by their own extinction or disgrace. The marketmen and hucksters and carters and mechanics' children who grew up to be Whyos had for the Jack the Giant Killer and Hop o' My Thumb stories of their childhood the traditions of the days when the blue-coated tyrants, now so arrogant in their protection of ash barrels and window panes, dared not to follow a cry of murder itself into the Five Points.

And ever with them was the morbid fascination of the Tombs, the continuous trundle of its crime carts to and from the brown court-house in the square, the daily grind of its police court mill, so uninteresting to the world at large, so full of hopes and fears and feverish conjecture, to those from among whom the grist is drawn, the rumors from within its walls of attempted suicide, assaults, escapes and, last and greatest influence of all, the breathless mystery of its hanging days, with their echoes of sympathetic anecdote, opinion and discussion, with which every barroom rang till the echoes rolled out into the street again, the playground of the listening children.

The very fame of the district supplied the means of gratifying the criminal ambitions thus raised. Nor is this mere speculation, but the deliberate opinion of the police official who has made the subject more of a study than has any other one; who spent seven years in the precinct—the Sixth or Elizabeth street station-house precinct—where the Whyos throve, and who put the Whyos down. The most profitable of the "lushes" who were "tackled"—*i. e.*, drunken men who were robbed—were those who, impelled by curiosity to see something of the night life of the "Bloody Sixth" ward, of the Points, of the Bend, wandered into the maze of crooked streets, succumbed to the vile liquor of the dives and offered a temptingly easy prey to those who sought to live up to the traditions of the past. Thus the fame of the old Five Points acted on the outside world to beget the propensity for "slumming" and thus reacted on itself by furnishing opportunity for its own maintenance. Thus the Whyo was evolved.

From 1878 until 1884 must be called the golden age of the gang. In the latter year the little Chatham street coterie was estimated to have grown to about one hundred and fifty in number, although not one-quarter of these were probably true Whyos acting under the direction of their leaders.

Every lad who had the courage to follow a drunken "slummer" out of McGlory's Armory Hall, which flourished in Hester street in the Whyo golden age, till he fell exhausted in his tortuous path toward a Third avenue car, called himself a Whyo. So did every young worse than rough who squired a pipe-loving damsel in any one of the fourteen opium joints which in the golden age found shelter in one big building, the "Big Flats," at Canal and Elizabeth streets. But actual membership in the gang meant more than an ability to repeat the

musical call, with its sharp inflection rising almost to falsetto on the first syllable and the low, long-drawn baritone note of its second. It meant that a way would be found to dispose of stolen goods. It meant also that considerable political influence would be exerted in behalf of a captured Whyo.

Thus it was that the leaders lived on a percentage of what the "fences" they knew paid for their followers' plunder, and also, though this is scarcely susceptible of proof, on the "boodle" given them on election days to put where it would do the most good. Whyo leaders who followed this rule led long and glorious careers. Those who deviated from it and soiled their hands with the manual labor of robbery were soon apprehended by the police and consigned to prison and oblivion.

But those who followed these short-sighted rulers—desperate Dan Driscoll and scheming Owney Bruen—never committed a robbery in person, or, at least, never were caught at one. In their own parlance they "stood for the stuff." The band of thieves under their direction operated almost at random in their bailiwick, prowled forth at night almost like ragpickers by day, seeking treasure trove in the human refuse about East Side dives, and returned at morn to have their plunder disposed of and their percentage awarded.

It was in these night excursions that the cry was used. When two or three of them would dart out of a dark tenement hallway and swoop down upon the staggering passer-by, another would watch at the corner, and if the victim's cries had set a bluecoat moving to his rescue the high note and the low note would ring out its warning—"Why-o! Why-o!"

The police did not at first comprehend the case, either in its immediate purpose of warning or as a symbol of banded lawlessness. When the first Whyo attained the dignity of murder no one knew that he was a Whyo or that there was a gang. This was Felix Lavelle, Dan Driscoll's prototype, who killed a woman, but only suffered for his crime the penalty of life imprisonment, though the murder was a far more Whyoish crime than the attempt on the life of John McCarthy, which ended in the death of "Beezie" Garrity. Lavelle, although he had been graduated through the House of Refuge to the Penitentiary for robbery and assault, was, like most of the gang, of decent parentage and retained acquaintance, the social ostracism machine of the Sixth ward not being in particularly good working order, with decent people. A month before he met pretty Sarah Hayden on Christmas Day, 1878, at White and Centre streets, she had been pretty Sarah Sullivan and he had been, convict though he was, a suitor for her hand.

Doubtless the girl bride's heart overflowed with good will as she tripped up Centre street from her home at No. 46 that afternoon. Love's young dream, which is just as radiant in Whyoland as Arcadia, was unbroken yet and Christmas cheer and salutations had painted its prisms to even brighter hues. Faix Lavelle, her rejected suitor, stood on the corner of White street as the girl came along, neat and rosy and dressed in her holiday and bridal best, perhaps the prettiest human thing on the East Side on Christmas Day. She saw the lonely Whyo and felt sorry for him. Poor Felix, all the world had been against him. So out of her store of happiness she gave him a pleasant smile and word.

The Whyo mind misinterprets every good action. What the girl meant for kindness the Whyo took for conquest. He stepped close to her. There was an instant's parley. Then the bride's rosy cheeks flushed to a deeper crimson of shame and indignation. With an insulted toss of her head she passed on.

Passed on, yes, but not far. The flame burned low in the shifty Whyo eyes and then leaped up into the flame of hate.

This Whyo "carried the gun" in as ready a pocket as his leader Driscoll ever did.

"Will you take that, then?" was what poor Sarah Hayden heard next, and before she knew what "that" was which had been substituted for his original proposition a pistol cartridge cracked, a pistol bullet sped, a pistol muzzle smoked on the holiday air and Richard Hayden's young wife—she was little more than half through her teens—

lay gasping on the Centre street pavement, her life blood staining her bridal and holiday finery.

Such was the merry Christmas the Whyo gave her, and death brought her a happy New Year one week later in St. Vincent's Hospital. Happy, because worse than the torture of the wound was the thought of her insulted wifehood; the thought that even so low a mind as the convict's should have placed so base an interpretation on her Christmas greeting. So through the women's ward of St. Vincent's there rang repeatedly that dreary holiday week the cry:

"I can't forget what Lavelle said to me. I can't get it out of my head!"

Sometimes it would be mingled with delirious talk about seeing angels and going away, and sometimes with tender farewell words to husband and parents, but all the speech of the dying girl bore that refrain of outraged womanhood's complaint:

"I can't forget what Lavelle said to me."

The next legal holiday of Washington's Birthday, 1879, saw Felix Lavelle on his way to Sing Sing. The day before, February 21, when Judge Barrett had sentenced him to life, his pious sister had lifted her eyes to the grimy General Sessions ceiling which shut out heaven from her view and cried out, "Oh, Lord Jesus, is my poor brother to be taken from me forever?" and fallen fainting to the floor. Thus did the first Whyo murderer set a high Whyo type, or what Whyos were, and the only effect of his conviction was to debar him from participation in the glories of the gang.

While they confined themselves to robberies in the maze of streets crisscrossing from Chatham Square through or about the Points to Centre street or to undetected manslaughter in the same localities, or to assaults which might be "squared," the Whyos were safe. But when they sought to reintroduce the customs of Hounslow Heath at Canal street and the Bowery vaulting ambition o'erleaped itself. The time was not ripe for a renaissance of the Turpin or Jack Sheppard style. So when Thomas or "Kid" Hunt, Dennis or "Butch" Harrington, now in the Tombs for assisting Dennis Sullivan to avenge the murder on the "Kid" the murder of his brother "Poll" and Michael Gaffney attempted to "stand and deliver" a coach at the corner of those two broad thoroughfares they were promptly arrested and sentenced to five years in Sing Sing. This was in October, 1880.

It was a serious blow to the gang the loss of these bold spirits, but they had their leader, and he always went free.

He winged his man in two impromptu duels as desperate as ever were fought in Texas or Kentucky. For neither did he so much as pay a fine. One encounter was in Wintermayer's, when he and "Pete" Flaherty, a burglar, but not a Whyo, quarreled in their cups and drew their pistols. Driscoll "got the drop" as his antagonist fired, broke his pistol arm and fled out of the door with a bullet singing after him.

The other duel grew out of the same incident which probably caused the murder of "Beezie" Garrity. It took place at No. 2 Pell street, a lodging house which was kept by John McCarthy, who moved up into the comparatively pure air of Hester street after that week in which the residents of Pell street, largely his lodgers, received ninety years in sentences for various felonies. Driscoll entered the door of the lodging house and opened a rapid fire on the bookkeeper who had ejected him. The latter promptly responded, but the Whyo's aim was truer, and the result of the exchange of two shots per duelists was a dangerous wound for the bookkeeper. Driscoll was arrested, but when the time came for a hearing there was no complaint.

One warm summer night in the Whyo golden age the leader strolled uptown. He was not on plunder bent. It was not necessary. He had simply left the cares of state behind at the boundary of his kingdom, Canal street. It was simply a case of *La Roi s'amuse*. Passing through a cross street between Second and Third avenues he saw a stout German citizen asleep in his shirt sleeves on his own doorstep. A street lamp showed the glitter of a watch chain

upon his rotund paunch. The spirit of the pickpocket waked in the leader.

Two minutes afterward the driver of a Second avenue car on the down track was astonished by the apparition of a wiry, brown-eyed, brown-mustached man, who leaped to the platform beside him, seized reins and whip from his hand and lashed his horses into a gallop. More astonished were the passengers as the car went fairly bounding down the track despite the conductor's angry bell and the ever fainter cry behind of "Stop, thief!" from a lumbering, breathless German citizen.

He was captured but never punished. One cannot wonder much at his wild rage and murderous threats against the Tombs warden when finally caged. The Tombs warden was a Sixth ward politician. Sixth ward politicians had encouraged in him the belief that he was entitled to immunity from punishment for all future crime by granting him immunity for all the crimes of his past. Why should not "Fatty" Walsh let him go free? "Fatty" knew he did not mean to kill the girl, and the girl was his own girl, anyway. Such conduct was "dirt." Such we may be sure were some of the thoughts that led to those tiger-like bursts of Whyo wrath with their blistering accompaniment of blasphemy which marked the beginning of the end of his eighteen months' career in jail.

Not less bold a feat than his piracy of a street car was his rape of a dray. That time he had been prevented from entering a Chrystie street lodging house. He was drunk, and whether his purpose was robbery or wanton mischief does not appear. He shot the man who resisted his ingress. The ball broke his leg. Then he fled to the Bowery, leaped on a passing dray, snatched reins and whip again, and again fled southward. The hue and cry was hard at the wheels, and when a block of vehicles stopped his course, a little boy who had run after him from the lodging house identified him. With a fluent delivery of curses the Whyo leader reached over the side of the dray and broke the lad's jaw with his revolver butt.

Nor for this was he punished. Why not? Who knows? Whyos were sometimes lost between the Tombs and the Island in those days. There were many ways of outwitting the law. Once Driscoll persuaded a "bum" to change clothes and sentences with him in the van.

But this was before his palmy days. When at his prime he never was pushed to such extremes of daring. He and his gang were a recognized political factor in the ward. It was not that they had so many votes of their own, for the highest census shows 25 in Mulberry street, 20 in Leonard, 10 in Park and 100 for all the rest of the Sixth ward. Many of these were not true Whyos, though they sounded the cry and blackmailed the wayfarer for "ten cents to rush de growler." Many were not of age. Whyo age ran from fifteen to thirty years. Many more were disfranchised by conviction for felony. But when the Whyo king went or sent a retainer along a block asking respectfully for votes for a certain candidate they were generally given.

Such was the golden age of the Whyos. Into their lives some rain had to fall, like the conviction of Hunt, Harrington and Gaffney when they tried their Turpinesque renaissance at Canal street and the Bowery, and the time that Jack Sea got a fine of $500 added to his five years' sentence for assaulting Assistant District Attorney O'Beirne in court after conviction. But they waxed fat and happy as a rule, and the sight of their leader, the great Danny, setting out for the races with his russet grip in his hand and a linen duster over his arm was a thing to charm. And there was an awful halo of successful criminality around his head which made the vicious of both sexes fall down and worship. Among them was "Beezie" Garrity, a game girl herself, as will be shown, such as the late Mr. Ainsworth would have loved to wed morganatically to Turpin or Sheppard in one of his romances of the road, and who aspired to the empire of the heart of the gamest of the gang to whose honor and glory, like the cry of "Hail!" to Roderick in his hall, arise the mellow cry, "Why oh!"

(Continued in Our Next Issue)

Mystery Magazine

The feature stories already published in this magazine are worth reading. The following are the titles of the novelettes contained in the numbers already printed.

1 "The Eel Man," by Robert Carlton Brown.
2 "Zitana of Maison Rouge," by F. W. Doughty.
3 "The Mysterious Web," by Armstrong Perry.
4 "Under the Hypnotic Spell," by Dr. H. Enton.
5 "The Silken Sheath," by Crittenden Marriott.
6 "A Fortune Teller's Secret," by Gladys Hall.
7 "The Mystic Emblem," by Marie Coolidge Rask.
8 "The Cards of Fate," by William Goode.
9 "Mr. Bachellor's Apartments," by W. H. Osborne.
10 "The Inner Wheel," by Octavius Roy Cohen.
11 "The Voice of the Valley," by Robt. C. Brown.
12 "The Sign of the Seven Sharks," by C. F. Oursler.
13 "Under a Mask," By Crittenden Marriott.
14 "Case 4,444," by Gladys Hall.
15 "After a Million," by Police Captain Howard.
16 "Shadowing the Blue Triangle," by C. F. Oursler.
17 "The Case of Captain Fortesque," by R. Ingalls.
18 "The Bird-Headed Sphinx," by Edith S. Tupper.
19 "The Double Mystery," by Dr. Harry Enton.
20 "The Magician Detective," by C. F. Oursler.
21 "King Cobra Mystery," by George Gilbert.
22 "The Haunted Corridors," by Wm. H. Osborne.
23 "No Man's Man," by Maxwell Smith.
24 "The Trevor Puzzle," by T. C. Harbaugh.
25 "The Trail of Roses," by Edmund Condon.
26 "The Hindoo Vanishing Clue," by Pauline Bouve.
27 "Who Was Guilty?" by Beulah Poynter.
28 "The Evil Eye," by Chas. F. Oursler.
29 "The Thirteenth Door," by Edith S. Tupper.
30 "The Game of Detective Carew," by L. Jerome.
31 "Law-maker and Law-breaker," by B. Poynter
32 "The Counterfeit Heiress," by Inspector Harrigan.
33 "Tracked to China," by Chief Roger O'Brien.
34 "After the German Spies," by May Halsey Miller.
35 "The Clue in the Box," by Alexander Douglas.
36 "Trained by a French Detective," by Rene Renaud.
37 "A Drop of Ink," by Lieut. Robt. W. Warden.
38 "The Ten Doctors," by Allan Arnold Fox.
39 "The Stain on Page 61," by Chas. T. Jordan.
40 "A Masked Mystery," by Police Sergeant Kelly.
41 "The Black Soul," by Beulah Poynter.
42 "The Sanctuary," by Wm. H. Osborne.
43 "The Mystery of the Seven Shadows," by Chas. F. Oursler.
44 "The Sign of the Dragon," by C. Martin Eddy, Jr.
45 "The Magic of Detective Woo Fang," by Frank F. Whitfield.
46 "The Decoy," by William Hamilton Osborne.
47 "The House With 30 Steps," by Ralph D. Porter.
48 "When the Clock Struck 13," by Dr. Harry Enton.
49 "A Piece of Blotting Paper," by Dorothy Weber.
50 "The $200,000 Mystery," by Ethel Rosemon.
51 "The Case of Dr. Brice," by Mary R. P. Hatch.
52 "The Phantom Motor," by Laura R. Montgomery.
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55 "The Inspector's Strange Case," by B. Poynter.
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To every person of 16 years or older sending a sketch I am going to mail free and prepaid the Draftsman's Ivorine Pocket Rule shown here. This will come to you entirely with my compliments. With it I will send a 6 x 9 book on "Successful Draftsmanship." If you are interested in becoming a draftsman, if you think you have or may attain drafting ability, sit down and copy this drawing, mailing it to me today, writing your name, and your address and your age plainly on the sheet of paper containing the drawing.

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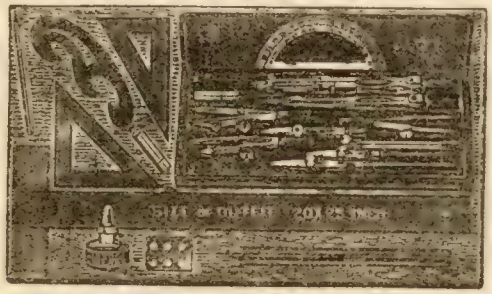

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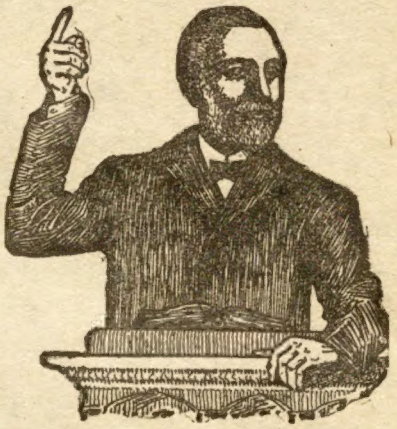

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"I had suffered agony for years from rheumatism and associated disorders, and Mrs. Reed was tortured with the demon neuritis almost beyond endurance. We had read and talked so much about 'Uric Acid' that our minds seemed poisoned. But the 'Inner Mysteries of Rheumatism' made it all clear to us and now we are both free from the suffering and misery we endured so many years. I believe I was the hardest man in the world to convert! For me to discard the old 'Uric Acid' theory, and what I now know to be absolutely false, for new, scientific understanding of the causes and cure of rheumatism, was like asking me to change my religious beliefs! But I did change, and it was a fortunate day for me and mine when I did so."

NOTE: "The Inner Mysteries of Rheumatism" referred to above by Pastor Reed lays bare facts about rheumatism and its associated disorders overlooked by doctors and scientists for centuries past. It is a work that should be in the hands of every man or woman who has the slightest symptoms of rheumatism, neuritis, lumbago or gout. Anyone who sends name and address to H. P. Clearwater, 1324-B Street, Hallowell, Maine, will receive it by mail, postage paid and absolutely free. Send now, lest you forget the address! If not a sufferer, cut out this explanation and hand it to some afflicted friend.

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